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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"OH! HEAVEN, HAVE MERCY AND SPARE MY DARLING," BROKE FROM EDITH LISTER'S LIPS AS SHE SANK DOWN BESIDE HIM.

HIS DEAREST TREASURE.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"Yes, they will all be here by the twelfth," said Marjorie Rainham; "Lady Peyton told me so to-day."

"And who are 'all'?" queried Grace Rivers, with languid interest, flitting her huge fan before her, to drive away an intrusive wasp, which seemed to mistake her pink-and-white face for some gay-hued flower.

"Well, Captain Beauchamp, Major Charteris, the Devereux, the Aspinalls, Lord Yarrow, and last, though by no means least, his high mightiness, Noel Vandeleur Penwith, of Penrith Castle, Cornwall, and Eaton-square, London."

"You must consider him mighty if he stands higher in your estimation than the Duke's son."

"I do," replied Miss Rainham, with a wicked twinkle in her black eyes. "He is

mighty, magnificent. It behoves one to speak of such a lady-killer, such a slayer of women's hearts, such a Narcissus and Adonis, with bated breath, and becoming awe."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed. Wait till you see him, and I am sure you will agree with me."

"I have seen him. In fact we are old friends," and the widow smiled complacently, and smoothed the frills of her cambric gown with her white, jewelled fingers.

"Really, Mrs. Rivers! and you have survived it!"

"Yes."

"You are a wonder, then. I thought all such insignificant things as women went down before the artillery of his attractions, and died of broken hearts, when left and neglected by him."

"I must be an exception to the rule, in that case, and you also, as you still live, and look blooming."

"Oh! it is different with me," said Marjory, hastily; "I met him four years ago, when I was only fourteen, a school-girl in short frocks and thick boots. I was utterly beneath his notice."

He always looked over the top of my head, never took the trouble to say good-night or good-morning, and used to flirt atrociously with any woman he could get hold of, when there was no one in the room but myself; just as though I was a chair, or a table, or any other inanimate object; without eyes to see, or ears to hear."

"Was it so very dreadful to flirt before a third person?" asked the widow, with an amused smile at the bright girlish face before her.

"No, not to flirt. But he did worse. He used actually to spoon, and each day with a different fair one. He always said the same things though."

"Did he?"

"Yes, and they seemed to like it very well. Perhaps that was because they didn't know he had said exactly the same thing to some one else a short time before, and would say them again a little later on."

"Perhaps so."

"I think it is mean—horribly mean, of a man to do that kind of thing. He is two-and-thirty now, and is old enough to know better."

"Upon my word, Marjory," remarked a young fellow, who was lying full length on the trim turf,

with his head on a heap of newly-cut grass. "Upon my word, I think you must be in love with Penrith, or you would never abuse him in this fashion. You do it to hide the depth and strength of your affection."

"Heaven forbid!" piously ejaculated his cousin, turning her eyes upon the blue, cloudless sky. "I couldn't love a man of that sort."

"Why not? He is handsome enough to please anyone."

"That may be, Joe. But his air of satisfaction and calm superiority is maddening, and the way he backs himself on to the best-looking woman in the room, married, single, or a widow, and allows her to amuse him, till he sees someone whom he thinks could do it better, is disgusting."

"The said women—married, single, or widows—don't seem to think so."

"No, more shame for them."

"Why?" asked Joe Peyton, with a cool laugh, and a quizzical glance at Mrs. Rivers, who was awaying her great fan slowly backwards and forwards. "Why, my child! The single and the widows amuse him because they hope and pray that some day he may take unto himself a wife, to help him to spend his ten thousand a year, and he installed mistress of his country estate and his town mansion; and the married do it because they are not happy in their matrimonial relations, and possibly would like to alter them—to divorce or be divorced, and to forge fresh fetters. They have an object, a good tangible one, and when women have, they never mind what trouble they take."

"It doesn't matter what amount of trouble they take in this case, for it won't do them a bit of good," announced Miss Rainsham, rather snappishly.

"Why not?"

"Because Noel Penrith isn't a marrying man."

"How do you know?" demanded her cousin, sending another sharp glance in Mrs. Rivers' direction, who, while she pretended to be absorbed in admiring the elaborate beading of her little *ballines*, was listening intently to the conversation.

"Because I heard him tell Willie, when I was staying at the Aspinalls, that he would be afraid to marry, as, from the way he had been chased and abused by match-making mamma, spinsters in the thirties, and poverty-stricken women in general, he was sure he would only be married for the sake of his money, and that if he were poor, he wouldn't be smiled on and petted as he is now, and then he said something to the effect that he had never seen a woman good enough for him, and he would require a 'rare pale Marguerite,' something quite out of the common—a woman who, though all modesty and innocence, would give him to understand plainly that she would feel grateful and obliged if he would throw her the handkerchief, and honour her by—"

"Marjory, Marjory, how can you tell such awful fibs!"

"They are not fibs!" declared Marjory, stoutly; "it's the truth, and he said besides, that he would never ask a woman to be his wife, unless he was pretty certain of her saying: 'Yes,' as he wouldn't care to be refused by a woman. And, oh! the scorn the man threw into that one word, I can't convey to you the least idea of it."

"I wouldn't try," said the young man, rather dryly. "I think you have said quite enough, Madame Marjory, and I don't think it is fair to libel the absent. That little uncivil member of yours runs away with you sometimes, and—"

"Poo!" interrupted the wilful young lady, with a pout.

"And makes you say things that you oughtn't to say," he continued, calmly. "I certainly don't think it is fair to make these sort of remarks behind a man's back, when he hasn't a chance of defending himself. Do you, Edith?" and he turned to address a girl sitting a little way apart in an easy garden chair, with a book of Swinburne's poems in her hand.

"I hardly know," she answered, slowly. "It certainly does not seem right to say unkind things of any one, and yet it is well to be fore-

warned with regard to the character of this man who is coming to stay here; then we poor women can be forewarned, and able in a measure to resist his matchless attractions."

"I hope you don't intend to believe all the rubbish Marjory has been chattering about Penrith."

"Well, of course I shall take it *cum grano*, still, there must be some truth in it, and I think men who fancy every woman they come across is going to fall in love with them, or their money, and try to marry them by main force, are very objectionable animals."

"You are quite right," agreed Joe. "only I assure you, Penrith isn't that kind of fellow. He has been tremendously petted and chased for obvious reasons, and is naturally a little cautious, and doubtful of the sincerity of women who are ready to adore him after an hour's acquaintance. I am certain, though, that he isn't the wretch Marjory describes him to be. He is a little proud and particular, like, as I suppose everyone else does, to be made much of, and—"

"Have the *fortunate* woman he thinks sufficiently good and uncommon for him, declare her love and sue for his, with becoming modesty and diffidence," concluded Edith Lister, with a sarcastic smile on her handsome mouth.

"No, no!" expostulated young Peyton, vehemently; "you have received a false impression, and like the rest of your sex you are so obstinate that you are determined to retain it, and won't listen to reason."

"Yes I will, Joe, on any subject but that of Noel Penrith."

"Oh, this is too bad," he ejaculated, wrathfully. "Marjory, I should like to shake you for what you have done."

"I dare say you would, dear boy, but I don't want to be shaken," and she settled herself comfortably in her chair, and went on reading her novel, Ouida's last.

"Mrs. Rivers, I appeal to you. Is Penrith the kind my cousin has depicted him?"

"Not exactly," rejoined the widow cautiously, still swinging the fan to and fro. "Yet I certainly think he is under the impression that penniless girls would be greatly obliged to him if he raised them to the dignity of mistress of his heart and home."

"Do you, really?" inquired his champion, rather dolefully.

"Yes, really, and I can assure you, Miss Lister, that the best way to get into his good graces is not to pay him much attention. You will find that answer when flattery and attention fail."

"Thank you!" responded Miss Lister, letting her eyes rest coldly on Mrs. Rivers' artistically "got up" face. "I have no wish to get into his good graces, so your advice is wasted upon me."

"Indeed! I thought it might be of use. He is an excellent match for a girl without a fortune," and the widow glanced somewhat spitefully at Edith's beautiful features.

Miss Lister did not vouchsafe an answer, but went on reading Swinburne, and silence fell on the little group.

The sunlight filtered through the thick foliage of the lime above them, loaded with sweet blossoms; there was the scent of hay on the breeze which rustled and stirred the clustering leaves, and swayed the brilliant dahlias and gorgeous sunflowers with its gentle touch ere passing on to murmur other world secrets to the giant oaks and elms beyond in the home park, where the cawing rooks built their nests and held high revel through the long summer days; there was the pleasant hum of bees around; butterflies swept by; ring-doves were cooing; traveller's joy crowned the hedges that surrounded the Peyton's garden; the honey-suckle was trailing sparingly; the last dog-rose was letting fall its snowy petals; away in the meadows the barley was ripening, and the wheat yellowing fast, and the moors were purple with heather.

It was a fair scene, lit up by the golden beams of the August sun, but Mrs. Rivers scarcely saw its beauties, or if she did took no note of them; her thoughts were busy with other things than real landscapes.

She had come to Peyton Manor with an object, and that object was the subjugation of Noel Penrith. She had accepted Lady Peyton's invitation, given the May before in town, with eager gratitude, because she knew Penrith, after nearly four years' absence abroad, would be sure to spend the shooting season with his old and most intimate friend Willie Peyton, and she also knew that a country house was a splendid field for matrimonial enterprise, and if this shy fish was to be landed by her she could do it better there than anywhere else, and she was anxious, terribly anxious, to obtain her quarry, and thought she had something to go upon.

Ten years before, Penrith, then a young fellow of twenty-two, had paid her marked attentions in his usual careless style, but had never actually proposed; so when Mr. Rivers, a wealthy city man, lost his heart irretrievably to pretty Grace Wynter, and begged hard to be made happy and her husband, her mother had obliged her to accept the offer, saying that Noel was only amusing himself at her expense, and that at six-and-twenty she could not expect to make a very brilliant marriage.

So the girl stifled the instincts and longings of her heart, remembering the fable of the dog who lost the substance, trying to grasp the shadow, and married the middle-aged city man, who had a big balance at his bankers; and for nearly eight years she revelled in every dissipation and luxury money could procure.

Then came the crash. Mr. Rivers' money seemed to melt away like the snow of last year. Ugly rumours were afloat, and one day he was found dead in his bed, and all his kind friends said it was certainly suicide, though a merciful jury brought in a verdict of "Death by misadventure from an overdose of chloral," so Grace was left a widow with two hundred a year, which was quite insufficient to supply the wants of the extravagant little woman; and a face from which the early freshness had faded, and which it was her constant care to embalm in a mixture of red and white paint and powder—laid on, it must be allowed, in a most artistic and scientific manner, yet perceptible at times in a strong light, or at the finish of a hard night's dancing.

She couldn't afford to wait. The two years of mourning were just up, and she had with infinite trouble obtained some gowns from her modiste, delicate greys and lavenders, and white lacey ones, marvels of daintiness, without paying for them, and thus armed and equipped for the fray had come to the Manor bent upon conquest. No thought of defeat had crossed her mind until that afternoon; but, as she looked at Edith Lister's calm, proud face, she felt intuitively that her hostess's sister might prove a dangerous rival. She was just the sort of girl Penrith would admire, tall, graceful, self-possessed, accomplished, and not given to making advances, or poaching on the rights of the other sex, by making love instead of being made love to.

She would be a dangerous rival, yes, with a fair field and no favour, but Grace Rivers mentally registered a vow that she should not have a fair field, and that Penrith should, very soon after his arrival, be acquainted with the fact that she was a genuine *basie*, and that her sister, Lady Peyton, was extremely anxious to get her well married to some nice, eligible young man.

Lady Peyton was not a match-maker, far from it, still she longed to see her dearly-loved and only sister settled, and with good reason. Edith's fortune consisted of sixty pounds a year, and was certainly not enough to live on. "She was ever welcome at the Manor, and always spent six or seven months at her brother-in-law's house, and the rest of the time visiting with friends who were glad to have her with them; but it was not an entirely pleasant mode of existence, and Edith secretly sighed for a home of her own, if even small and quiet."

Her pride which was her greatest and almost only failing, forbade her bring altogether on Sir William's charity, though the Baroness, with whom she was a great favourite, would have been more than pleased if she would have done so; and his wife never ceased pleading with her sister to share the good fortune that was her lot; and

was always met with a steady though gentle refusal.

The good fortune of finding a rich, well-bred and devoted husband had come unexpectedly to Marian Lister. Five years before, when she was thirty, and had given up all thoughts of matrimony, she met at the Aspinalls, where she was living as companion, with a good salary, which eked out her slender income and enabled her to keep Edith, who was twelve years her junior, at a fashionable finishing school, Sir William Peyton, a man about her own age; a bluff, honest, good-tempered country gentleman, who fell in love with her sweet face and sweeter disposition, and made love in such downright earnest, and with such exceeding promptitude, that he met her, proposed, was accepted and married, all within a month. "Happy's the wooing that's not long a-doing," and happy it proved in Lady Peyton's case. During the five years of her married life she had never regretted her choice; she was perfectly happy in her matrimonial relations, and the only bitter drop in the cup was her sister's unprotected state and uncertain future.

"I wish she wasn't so proud," murmured the mistress of the Manor, looking up from the delicate lace work she was occupied with, and sending a tender glance towards the graceful figure under the shade of the blossom-burdened lime. "I fear it will interfere sadly with my little matrimonial plan. It will be a case of Greek meeting Greek. Heigho! what a contrary world this is! I must try to-morrow to drop a few judicious words in praise of Noel to her. Now, my darlings," she added, addressing two little toddlers of four, who were playing at her feet. "Run and tell Auntie that tea is ready, and to come in with the others; and then she stood with a world of affection in her soft grey eyes, watching the twins as they trotted hand-in-hand over the green sward, going as steadily and demurely as though they were an old man and an old woman instead of two mere infants.

"Mummy says tea is eddy," lisped Myrtle touching her aunt's hand.

"Is it, my precious?" catching the mite up in arms and kissing her fondly, her calm, proud face altering strangely, and showing what a loving heart there was under that cold exterior. "We will come in then," she gave a hand to each of the babies and walked to the house between them, followed by the others, who were all ready, even down to Joe, for their five o'clock tea.

"Look at the time," cried Lady Peyton, gaily, as they entered the room in which she was seated, presiding at the tea-table. "It is nearly half-past five. What were you doing to forget your tea?"

"We were having a most interesting discussion," replied Marjory, gravely.

"Indeed! May I ask what it was?"

"Certainly," she acquiesced, with greater gravity. "According to Joe, we have been proving and conning as to whether a certain gentleman of our acquaintance is a cad or not."

"Who is the gentleman?"

"Noel Penrith."

"Oh! and what was your decision?" Lady Peyton glanced at her sister as she put the question.

"The house is divided. Joe said he is a rascal, says Mrs. Rivers won't commit herself to any decided opinion, and Edith and I consider him an objectionable animal."

"My dear!" expostulated her hostess, in dismay.

"We do, really, and a lady-killer as well."

"But—but Edith doesn't know him."

"No," broke in Joe, wrathfully, "and that little wretch Marjory has made her believe that he is a low-minded cad by chattering a whole heap of rubbish about him."

"So he is!" muttered Miss Rainham, sotto voce.

"You are very wrong to do that, Marjory," said Lady Peyton, with an amount of severity that was astonishing for her. "You should never traduce people behind their backs; it is mean, and Noel Penrith is an honourable, noble fellow, with very few of the failings common to most of

the young men of the present day. I hope, Edith, that you won't think anything more about this."

"Certainly I shall not," replied Miss Lister, with the utmost nonchalance, as she played with the little gilt spoon, poised it on the tip of her delicate finger, to the intense delight of the twins, who watched her with wide-open eyes. "I don't know Mr. Penrith, have no particular ambition to make his acquaintance, and shall leave thinking about him and his affairs to other women whom it may interest."

She added the last clause because she saw Mrs. Rivers was looking at her with a malicious twinkle in her light-blue eyes, and it roused the girl's haughty spirit.

"Of course it can't interest you," agreed Marian, quickly, seeing she had made rather a mistake; "but I don't wish you to be unjustly prejudiced," and then Lady Peyton maintained a judicious silence; but for the rest of the afternoon and evening there was a cloud on her usually placid face.

CHAPTER II.

"MR. PENRITH will be here to-day, Edith," announced Lady Peyton, a few days later, as she and her sister sat in her dainty boudoir, gay with bright chintzes, Persian rugs, lace curtains, veiling, pink satin, and all the feminine knick-knacks which make a room so charming, strown about.

"Indeed!"

"Yes; he is coming with Lord Farrow. They are both rather tired of town, and of Ryde, Brighton, and other gay places, where they have been so long, for a little quiet, and they are coming here, to enjoy a few days of it before the twelfth."

"Quiet to quick bosoms is a hell," quoted Marjory, sententiously, as she sprang through the open window and alighted at Edith's feet. "Narcissus will soon get tired of it and sigh for other fields and pastures new, and wild dissipation of all sorts."

"Marjory, I must beg you not to speak in this way of Mr. Penrith. It is most unjust, and I may add, unbecomingly. I am sure Sir William would be more than annoyed if he knew of the way in which you disparage his most intimate friend. Remember,—"

"A lie that is wholly a lie can be met with and fought with outright. But a lie that is half a lie is a harder matter to fight."

You know next to nothing about the young man, and draw your unfair conclusions from having seen him do what heaps of other men do, when staying in the same house with attractive women—chat with them and pay them the polite attentions a true gentleman always gives to members of the fair sex. I am inclined to think your pride was wounded because he did not, seeing you were a mere child, pay attentions to you. You are a vain little thing."

"It isn't that, indeed, Lady Peyton," burst out Marjory; but her hostess, without waiting to hear what she had to say, left the room, looking very much annoyed.

"How I hate that man!" ejaculated Miss Rainham, after a minute's silence, clenching her tiny hands and bringing them down with considerable force, not on the white goat-skin rug as she meant to, but on the back of Mrs. Rivers' fat poodle, causing that elderly animal to yelp and howl dimly; and how I should like to take him down a peg, and show him that all women are not silly enough to worship him and his money."

"So should I!" said Edith, quietly.

"Would you?"

"Yes, I should like to lead him on to propose to me, and then reject him with scorn and contempt."

"That would be grand! Do try and get him to propose. You can easily do it, you are so lovely," and Marjory gazed with genuine admiration at the pale, statuesque face of her friend.

"I don't know about that. I might compass it if I exerted myself, but query, is it worth the trouble?"

"Worth the trouble? Why of course it would be. Just picture to yourself the expression of his face when he expected to hear a 'Yes' and only got a 'No'! It would be worth any amount of plotting and planning. And then you would out that little horror, Mrs. Rivers. I am sure she has come here to entrap some unfortunate man into being her second. She has even, for want of anyone better, eyed Joe—my Joe. What impudence!" and the heiress stamped her foot and looked as though she could have boxed the 'little horror's' ears.

"As that is the case, Marjory, wouldn't it be better for you to try and get Mr. Penrith to offer you his hand and heart?" suggested Miss Lister, calmly.

"It wouldn't be a bit of use. I'm not good-looking enough, and he doesn't like short people. Besides, Joe mightn't like it, and I only care to talk to him," and a tender smile crossed the wilful little woman's dusky face.

"Well, then, if this creature is to be taken down, I suppose I must do it."

"Yes, certainly. Make yourself very magnificent for dinner, and carry the fortress by storm. Shall I go and get you some flowers?"

"Yes, please. Some scarlet geraniums and stephanotis. Bring them up to me," and Edith went slowly to her room to attire herself for conquest, a thoughtful look in her gay eyes, and a line on her fair brow.

A couple of hours later Miss Lister descended to the drawing-room, looking splendidly handsome and queenly, in a gown of shimmering white, with the geraniums and stephanotis at her breast and in her soft, wavy hair. All the guests were assembled, as she meant they should be, when she made her appearance, and she created a perceptible sensation as she entered. Lord Farrow, a great blue-eyed, broad-shouldered giant, who was talking to Sir William, came forward to greet her with *empressment*; and even the tall aristocratic stranger talking to Mrs. Rivers looked a second time at the new comer, while Marjory, sitting in a corner with Joe, whispered, "Doesn't she look lovely?" and Joe muttered, "Yes, but not so nice as you," and received a pinch for his compliment that nearly made him screech.

"Mr. Penrith, my sister," said Lady Peyton, with considerable pride; and Edith bowed boldly to the man whose love she intended to win, simply to reject; and turning at once continued her conversation with Nelson Farrow, who had been cherishing a hopeless affection for her for considerably over a year without daring to give utterance to his passion.

Marian would have liked to tell Noel to take her sister in to dinner, but she felt it would not be polite, so sent him in with the widow, much to that enterprising person's delight, and told Lord Farrow to take Edith, while Marjory was paired off with the devoted Joe.

During dinner Miss Rainham watched Mrs. Rivers with keen disapproval, as she sighed and languished and looked love unutterable out of her pale eyes at her cavalier, who, truth to tell, seemed quite agreeable to being languished at, and never sent a single glance at the pale face opposite him, partly hidden by the silver *épergne* with its load of roses and exquisite ferns.

The widow had much to tell him about mutual friends; and having been away from England for some years he was quite willing to listen to the *on dis* and racy bits of scandal that his fast companion told with such go and spirit, with many a flourish of her white fingers, which were simply miniature jewel-stands for the exhibition of costly rings, and many a nod of her golden-hued head and curve of her reddened mouth. She amused him and he wanted to be amused. Killing time at best idyllic work, and that had been his only occupation since he left Oxford, and took possession of the splendid estate and castle left him by his uncle.

Noel Penrith was a man with a vigorous intellect and a tender heart, but one had rusted from want of occupation, and the other had become somewhat sceptical through the treachery of a woman he had loved in his early youth, who had deceived him, and left him to marry a richer man, and also from the amount of attention he

was in the habit of receiving from all spinsters, who would shamelessly snub poor men to gain his favour, and who were, as Joe said, ready to adore him after an hour's acquaintance. He hardly believed in women collectively, though he did individually. There were a few he admired and esteemed greatly, and one of them was his friend Peyton's wife.

For Marion was a great glory of a woman—fine, tall, strong, handsome, with yellow hair and grey eyes, and the sweetest expression in the world.

When he had met her on his return to England the previous June, in town, he had been loud in his praise of her beauty and charm of manner, and had been heard to declare that when he met a woman like Willie's wife that he should marry.

He had been told she had a sister, then staying in Ireland, and felt some curiosity to see her. Now, his feeling was one of disappointment.

She was far lovelier than Lady Peyton, with a more graceful figure and distinguished air, but she seemed to him cold, emotionless and haughty to a degree, and he didn't quite like haughty women, he wasn't used to them.

Nelson Farrow was in the seventh heaven during that dinner, Edith had never been so gracious and smiling to him, and the poor fellow's heart began to beat with a dangerous feeling of joy and hope; and after the ladies left the dining-room he edged until the strains of a rich soprano voice singing, "Tell me yet again," gave him a good excuse for joining them.

He made his way at once to the piano, at which Miss Lister was seated, and begged for another song, and yet another, when that was gradually accorded him, and then finding a duet, "Voce Arcane," he sang it with her, and fell deeper and deeper in love with this beautiful statuesque woman who would never play Galatea to his Pygmalion, and let him wake into life and warmth the coldness of her heart and soul.

"A woman's head is always influenced by her heart, but a man's heart is always influenced by his head," says Lady Blessington.

This is not *always* the case, and it was not likely to be so in that of Edith Lister and Nelson Farrow.

His heart knew no influence save that of her matchless beauty, and his head couldn't help him in the matter at all; so he was in a bad way and likely to come to grief over it.

"Are you as fond of music as you used to be?" asked the widow, as Penrith lounged up to her and sat down beside her on the sofa, so close that he crushed the boucles of her dainty lavender gown.

"Yes, rather, I prefer singing, though."

"Most people do, I think. Do you like Miss Lister's voice?"

"Well, I am not much of a judge. It is a fine voice, I suppose, but seems to me to lack expression."

"A great many people are of that opinion. She is cold altogether—lacks animation. What do you think of her? She is considered a perfect beauty. Do you admire her?"

"Admire her? I hardly know yet. I haven't looked at her more than three times."

"Three times! Have you counted them that you know so accurately, and haven't they been enough to allow you to form an opinion?"

"Hardly. I like to study a face. In a casual glance one often misses the best points."

"Yes, I am disappointed, though, that you won't give me your opinion."

"Are you? Then I'll study her now to please you," and, turning, he gazed with lazy indifference at Edith, who was just lifting her head to answer some questions of Farrow's.

The wax candles in the crystal chandeliers threw their light on the upturned face, with its arching black brows, mobile lips, and straight features, showing every curve distinctly.

"Well, what do you think?" demanded Mrs. Rivers, with an eagerness she could not altogether conceal, as he finished his survey.

"She is beautiful, I suppose," he answered, slowly, almost reluctantly, "but it is the beauty

that one looks for in a statue, or a picture, not in a living woman. It is too cold."

"Yes, as I said before, she lacks animation."

"Exactly so, and she is too pale."

"You are right in that. It would be a charity for some one to advise her to use a little rouge, although I think it a terrible thing for women to make up," concluded the widow, audaciously, flirting her inseparable companion, the huge fan, with a certain sort of artificial grace.

"A terrible thing, indeed," agreed her companion, favouring her with a stare from his dark eyes, and wondering if she thought him fool enough not to see the skillful blinding of *poudre* *maréchale* and bloom of roses that decorated her face.

"Mrs. Rivers, won't you give us the pleasure of hearing you to-night?" asked Lady Peyton, crossing over to the sofa where her two guests sat, with the intention of dislodging them, for she did not at all approve of pronounced flirtations, and knew it would be fatal to her little matrimonial plan if Penrith were to attach himself as the fast widow's devoted cavalier.

"I shall be very pleased. But I am not in good voice, so excuse me if I break down," simpered Mrs. Rivers, as she made her way to the piano, followed, to Lady Peyton's intense dismay, by Penrith, who turned the leaves, and listened, standing beside, while she sang "Golden Love" in a high treble, and generally murdered that charming song.

"Very pretty ballad that," remarked Sir William, when she had finished. He felt he must say something as host, but being a truthful man could not compliment her on the beauty and sweetness of her voice.

"Glad you liked it!" she answered, rather shortly, with a smile that ended in a frown, as, in obedience to a sign from his hostess, crossed over to a little table where she was sitting with Lord Farrow and Edith, looking at some sketches and photographs.

"Here are some views of Venice, Mr. Penrith. We got them when we were there last autumn, and of Florence, Rome, and several other southern places. They may interest you, as you have spent so much time in them."

"Thanks! I am sure they will," and he took the sketches and studied them with apparent interest, while Mrs. Rivers from the music stool, which to her just then was a veritable stool of repentance, shot glances of apprehension at her coveted quarry, and strove valiantly to listen with polite attention to her host's conversation, which was chiefly about horses and cattle, fat pigs, and prize sheep, mangel wurtzels, and turnips, oats and barley, top dressing, surface drainage, and other things that were totally uninteresting to her.

"What a glorious place Venice must be," said Edith, as she looked at a photograph of the Doge's palace by moonlight. "How much I should like to go there!"

"Have you never been?" inquired the Duke's son, with an air of tender interest.

"No, never."

"Then I can assure you that there is a treat in store for you," remarked Penrith, enthusiastically, addressing her for the first time. "You will enjoy seeing it thoroughly. It is a grand old place, with its streets of rippling waves, its graceful gondolas, its magnificent buildings, and romantic associations. One can go there over and over again, and never tire of it; at least, I never do."

"Indeed!"

Miss Lister only ejaculated the one word, but she managed to throw a wonderful amount of expression into the disyllable, arching her delicately marked brows at the same time, and favouring him with a cool stare which as much as said, "Who was addressing you?" and which made him feel as she meant it should—snubbed and sat upon, and uncomfortable to no small degree.

A flush spread over his dusky face at the rebuff, and he was careful, for the rest of the evening, not to address his conversation to the sister of his hostess.

"Well, how did I get on?" she asked, as

Marjory ran into her room, as she sat brushing her long hair before retiring for the night.

"Pretty well for a beginning," returned Miss Rainham. "His face was delightful when you snubbed him. He turned as red as though someone had boxed him on both cheeks, and looked awfully astonished."

"He did, rather! He isn't accustomed to being snubbed—"

"No," broke in the other, "I should think not! Did you ever see anything more disgusting than the way Mrs. Rivers languished at him; and he seemed to like it—actually seemed to like it! That woman is a toad, Edith, or was one in her former state!"

"My dear!"

"She was, I'm sure! Though, of course, toads don't paint, and blacken their eyes, and tangle their hair, and pinch their waists till they can hardly breathe, and wear shoes several sizes too small for them, and dye, and plaster, and make themselves up until they are odious to look at, and a great deal more horrible than nature intended them to be. Still she has the cold, cruel eyes of a batrachian reptile, and that is what I take my inference from."

"Really! You are learned! And what may a batrachian animal be?"

"A reptile pertaining to the [frog or toad order," rejoined Marjory, with an air of great wisdom and gravity.

"Indeed! Well, I think you are rather hard on the poor little soul."

"Do you! I don't! She is a horror, and I wonder Marian asks her here!"

"She was invited here because she is amusing, and every hostess knows that men must be amused by frivolous, chatty women in a country house at times."

"For instance, take a wet day with twenty male guests, what could Marian do with them? They couldn't all play at billiards. Very few men, who are ardent sportsmen, care for chess and those sort of amusements, and battledore and shuttlecock in the picture gallery is a game, as a rule, not much affected by men over twenty, unless they are very good-natured fellows like Lord Farrow."

"You see she will be of great use on an occasion of that sort, as all is fish that comes to her net; and if she can't manage to get Mr. Penrith to flirt with her in a quiet corner of the library, she will be just as sweet, just as tender and confiding to Major Charteris, Captain Beauchamp, or any other eligible man who may chance to be staying here."

"I think Marian was quite right to ask her, as it is not every woman who will make herself cheap and flirt with men on a rainy day, to amuse them and oblige her hostess; and setting all that aside, it is a charity—a downright charity—because [one of the numerous little affairs may end in something serious, and obtain for her the prize she covets—a well-to-do husband!"]

"I object to that more than to anything else about her! She has no right to come husband-hunting at a respectable house!"

"Oh! yes, she has!" laughed Edith. "All is fair in love and war; and remember her penniless condition and many debts!"

"That's no excuse for the shameless way in which she tries to entrap men!"

"I consider it is. You can't understand it, of course, as you will come into twelve hundred a-year shortly, and will never have any need to angle or entrap men; but with her it is a matter of life or death."

"Perhaps so; and she will make catching Noel Penrith a matter of life or death. She will interfere with our plans there, and be a dangerous rival for you in the gaining of his affections."

"Will she? I am not afraid of her!" and Miss Lister threw back the magnificent hair that fell about her like a veil, and glanced for a moment at the reflection of her beautiful colourless face in the glass. "No, I am not afraid; and now run away, Marjory, I must get some beauty sleep to-night."

CHAPTER III.

In spite of her anxiety about her beauty sleep, Miss Lister looked remarkably well the next morning as she stood on the steps talking to Lord Farrow, her riding-habit gathered up over her arm, her little hands covered with white gauntlet gloves, and the most bewitching of top hats perched on her chestnut-tressed head.

"A very handsome woman!" thought Penrith, as he came round from the stables with Sir William, and noted her graceful attitude and perfect get-up, "yet hardly a pleasant one—too proud and cold."

Nevertheless, he would not at all have objected to ride with her, and cast a glance of envy at Farrow as he assisted her to mount, and then rode off by her side.

"Aren't you coming, Mrs. Rivers?" he asked, as that lady appeared for the first time that morning, as it was one of her rules never to get up until, as somebody once said, the world was well aired.

"No, unfortunately I can't ride, so I shall lose the delight of a canter this bright morning."

"What a pity! You ought to learn. I will teach you if you like. The other horse I have down here, Rufus, is very quiet, and will carry a lady."

"Oh! thanks. It is very kind of you. I shall be delighted," gushed the widow, feeling she dared not refuse an offer which might lead to several hours being spent alone with Noel, but at the same time experiencing a tremor, for she was an arrant little coward, and afraid of horses.

"As soon as you can get your habit, then, the lessons shall commence. *Au revoir*," and waving his hand he galloped away, and soon overtook Marjory and Joe, who were ambling along slowly some fifty yards in the rear of Lord Farrow and Miss Lister, while Mrs. Rivers went up to her room and wrote off to Redfern to make her a habit at once, wondering dimly as she did so how it would be paid for if Noel Penrith did not make her mistress of himself and his large fortune.

Meanwhile the riding party went on through the glow and brilliance of the August day, over moors where the heather was purpling, down shady lanes flanked by bloom-decked hedges, by summer fields where the golden corn stood glinting and shimmering ready for the reaper's hand, and the scarlet poppies flaunted their gay blossoms in the warm sunshine, and the sky was clear and cloudless. A slight haze lent a charm to the distant landscape, where the succession of hills, lifting their tall crests beyond hills, and ravines fringed with foliage, with just a peep of the blue tossing ocean to the left, made a picture that was well worth studying.

The air was full of mellow fragrance, the scent of ripening fruit and grain, and sweet sounds. All nature seemed to be rejoicing, from the sky-baunting lark to the gay-coated grasshopper. The air was exhilarating, existence a pleasure, and the party from the Manor, as they rode on through highways and by-ways, were by no means indifferent to the rustic beauties around them.

"Where are we going, Miss Rainham?" inquired Penrith, after a time, which he had employed by making himself so extremely agreeable and attentive to Marjory, that that vain little person was much mollified and somewhat flattered, and began to think, after all, he wasn't quite such a monster as she had thought him.

"First to St. Outhbert's Well in Drossington Wood, and then as we come back Mr. Peyton is going to see how the young pheasants are getting on. Sir William is always anxious about them."

"Yes," chimed in Joe, with a laugh, "for three months before the first of October I don't believe my brother gets one night's good rest. He is so anxious about the success or failure of his 'big shoot' and the rearing of the baby pheasants."

"Indeed!" remarked Noel. "And what is the attraction at the well?" he continued, again addressing himself to Marjory.

"It is a wishing well. Anyone who drinks the waters and wishes at the same time is sure to get their wish within the year."

"And do you believe that?" asked the young man, glancing with some curiosity at the dark, *mignonne* face beside him.

"Most assuredly I do!" replied Miss Rainham, with the utmost gravity.

"She is half Irish, Penrith, and that accounts for her superstition and her wilful ways!" laughed her youthful lover.

"Joe, how dare you asperse my character! I've a great mind to give you a thrashing!" and she lifted her dainty little whip threateningly.

"Do!" he whispered, bending forward in the saddle till his lips almost touched her ear. "Do, and I'll kiss you a dozen times for it when we get home."

"Pooh!" she answered, using her favourite expression to denote her sovereign contempt, and making a derisive move at him, after which ebullition she turned her back on him, and devoted her whole attention to her other cavalier until they arrived at the well.

"We can't dismount—how can we drink of these wonderful waters!" said Miss Lister, as they all reined up in a dim, moss-grown dell, where a silver stream of water welled up from the rocks.

"I can," cried Peyton, springing with wonderful agility off the fat cob he bestrode. "Punch will stand still."

And the docile animal did, while his master picked his way carefully over the green, slimy stones, and filled the collapsible cup he had brought.

"You ought to wish," observed Lord Farrow, as Edith took the cup Joe offered her.

"Ought I?"

"Certainly," struck in Marjory. "Think of what you most wish for in the whole world."

"I have thought. I wish," and as she spoke for a moment her eyes rested on Noel Penrith's face, and then she drank the cool, clear draught.

"What lovely eyes," thought Noel, as he met the glance of those long-fringed, limpid grey orbs. "Pity they don't belong to a woman with a heart, and some little life about her."

"You must wish," she went on, when it came to Lord Farrow's turn to partake of the magic waters.

"I shall be only too glad to do so," he said, eagerly, with a look at her, that brought a faint pink tinge to her cheek. "But I am afraid it won't be any use. I have been wishing for one thing for a whole year, and fear I am no nearer the attainment of my wish now than I was then," and he ended with a sigh.

"Don't give it up yet. Patience and perseverance overcome all difficulties," was Marjory's consoling advice.

"I don't mean to give it up while I have the ghost of a chance," muttered the young man, as Joe vaulted into the saddle, and they set out on their homeward way.

"That's right. 'Faint heart,' etc.," and then she reined back her horse to Joe's, and let the other three ride on in front, which they did, and one of the three was not at all well pleased at the arrangement, and thought that the old saying, "Two's company three's none," a very good one.

Not that Lord Farrow had much to be jealous of, for Miss Lister hardly addressed a single sentence to her right-hand cavalier; though she chatted graciously with the duke's son, still he would have preferred having her all to himself.

But some influence stronger than his will drew Penrith to her side. He couldn't tell what it was, for he thought her manner repellent, and her beauty, though undeniable, of too cold and haughty a type.

It was strange and bewildering, and it made him quite callous and indifferent to Nelson Farrow's black looks.

Perhaps the very fact of her evident indifference charmed him. He had received so much adulation that the change was novel and pleasing.

Whatever it was he kept his place, even when

they reached the home preserves, where they dismounted, some of the under-keepers coming out to hold their horses, and went in to see the number of birds Sir William's keepers would have to turn down for his "big shoot" in the following October.

They walked round slowly, examining the rows of boxes and hen-coops, and watching the young pheasants as they pecked and pattered about in the grass, or among the twigs arranged for them to disport themselves in.

"Everything going on satisfactorily?" inquired Joe.

"Yesir, everything," responded Bates, the head gamekeeper. "Them birds 'all be grand—jist grand, tho' I says it myself as oughtn't, as I've had the rearin' of 'em. And many's the night I've sat up and watched 'em, to see 'em secure and comfortable, and fed punctual. Sir William needn't fear. They'll be plentiful enough this year."

"He will be glad of that. I shall tell him all is well."

"Yesir."

"Look at that poor creature! What a state of anxiety she seems to be in!" remarked Miss Lister, in a pitying tone, as they turned to leave, pointing at an old barn-door hen, who kept poking her head through the bars of the coop, and clucking loudly, in her desperate endeavours to recall the wild brood she hatched to the safe shelter of their birth-place.

"By Jove! I wonder if she has any feeling?" reflected Penrith, "or is that prettily expressed pity assumed for our edification?"

He was answered a few days later.

Miss Lister was coming across the garden to the house, and little Mysie seeing her ran to meet her aunt, and tripped falling heavily to the ground. In a moment Edith was at her side, and taking the weeping child in her arms, caressed it tenderly, a wonderful look of love softening the beautiful, proud face, and lingering in the grey eyes.

"Happy the man who wins such a look as that from her," muttered Penrith, who was watching the scene from the terrace, and hastened to offer assistance.

"Let me carry Mysie, Miss Lister!"

"No, thank you. I will carry her."

"But she is too heavy for you."

"Not at all. She will be quieter with me. I am accustomed to her weight," and with a stately bend of her graceful head she passed on with her sobbing burden, pressing the curly golden head to her breast, and whispering pretty nonsense to the little sufferer.

For a minute or two Narcissus, as Marjory had nicknamed him, stood gazing after the tall, lithe figure, and then with something very like a sigh, he went over to the lime, under whose bracing leaves sat Mrs. Rivers, in the daintiest of dainty tea-gowns, with the obese poodle on her knee, and the big fan near at hand.

"Miss Lister seems to be fond of children," he remarked, after a little small talk. "I think it a good trait in a woman's character."

"The very best!" replied the widow, impressively. "A woman who does not care for children must be bad, heartless, worthless! It is our duty to love the tiny angels given to our care, and the instinct of motherhood is strong in every true, sweet woman's breast. Ah! if you only knew how I longed and sighed and prayed for the touch of baby fingers on my hands, the lisp of baby voices in my ear. But alas! the pains and joys of motherhood were denied me!" she concluded, with a heavy sigh and a sentimental air.

"Ah! really, very sad indeed!" muttered Noel, rather astonished and overcome at this burst of sentimentality from a woman who was worldly from the crown of her fluff-tressed head to the sole of her satin-shod little foot, and who, it was evident, would have voted babies an insufferable bore, and have relegated them without mercy to the charge of hirelings, and the comforts of a mother-neglected nursery.

"I don't know, though," she went on, after a while, watching him furtively from under her light lashes, "that Miss Lister really cares for children."

"Don't you? Why?" he demanded, in a disappointed tone. "She seems to be very fond of Myles and Lionel. Most devoted to them."

"Yes, she seems so; but that is all, I think."

"Why what do you mean?"

"It may be to her interest to appear intensely fond of them. Of course it pleases Sir William."

"Well, what of that?"

"What of that?" echoed Mrs. Rivers, eagerly. "What of that? Why it ensures her a home, wins her a warm welcome here—here in a house where money is plentiful—and also luxuries that would never make her life pleasant elsewhere, as she couldn't afford them. She is penniless, absolutely penniless—the widow was warring spiteful, consequently slightly untruthful—without a brass farthing, so she finds it answer very well to fawn on her rich brother-in-law, make much of his children, and thus earn for herself comfortable quarters!"

"You surprise me," said Noel, rather coldly. "Miss Lister dresses with such exquisite taste; and so well, that I was quite under the impression that she had some money of her own."

"The impression was an erroneous one. The fine gowns she wears are presents from Lady Peyton. She could never afford to buy that beautiful Irish point which trimmed the robe she wore last night."

"No, I suppose not, as she is penniless."

"No, nor that grand set of sables that came from Cook's a week ago. She is like the person in the Bible, I forget who, as I don't read it often," she continued, with a metallic, artificial particularly unpleasant laugh, "who had not a place wherein to lay his head. Neither has she, except such as are provided by the charity of her friends."

"That is rather sad," observed the young man, reflectively. "Every woman ought to have some sort of a home of her own. Why doesn't she marry?"

"It is not her fault, nor that of Lady Peyton, that she has not entrapped some rich man long ago," rejoined his companion, significantly.

"If she has tried I wonder at her not succeeding, for she possesses a rare loveliness."

"Perhaps her efforts are too apparent."

This was said with an immense amount of envy, hatred and malice.

"Hardly in the case of Lord Farrow. He is evidently deeply in love, and she does not encourage him much, if at all."

"Of course not. Don't you see the reason?"

"No."

"He is the Duke of Earnshaw's third son. If he were the eldest she would smile very sweetly on him, in order to win the strawberry leaves and become your grace."

"I think you are wrong," said Penrith, gravely, as he rose to go, not over well pleased at the amount of spleen and jealousy exhibited by the peace widow against her hostess's sister. "I do not believe Miss Lister would give her hand to any man unless she gave her heart, as well!"

"Bah!—nonsense! She would marry anyone with a long rent-roll."

"I am not of that opinion," he returned with great coldness, as he left her and went towards the house.

"Shows what a fool you are!" she muttered furiously between her teeth; for she felt she had made a step in the wrong direction, a regular faux pas, and she was wrathful accordingly—so wrathful that she actually shook the unfortunate poodle savagely as she put him on the ground and swept up to her room to array herself in gorgeous attire for dinner, and try and regain lost ground.

But her efforts were useless, and her filmy black gown, with its artistic adornment of blood-red pomegranate flowers, was wasted on the desert air—in other words, Noel Penrith never came near her once during the evening and she had to be satisfied with the attentions she received from Major Charteris, an elderly beau with a wonderful brown wig, and a disagreeable habit of shouting out, "Eh—what!" before the unfortunate person he was addressing,

had time to answer his question, and Mr. Devereux, a widower with a large estate, the manifold attractions of which were counterbalanced in Mrs. Rivers' eyes by the fact that he was the father of three large daughters as well, all rising thirty, and eager to marry themselves, though not so eager to allow their father to "go and do likewise."

Noel Penrith that evening hovered unceasingly about Edith, greatly to the annoyance of Lord Farrow, Captain Beauchamp, and some other gay mashers, who had come for a shot at the grouse, and who were quite ready in the meantime to worship at the shrine of beauty, and bask in the light of a pair of lovely eyes.

"Won't you sing?" asked Farrow, hoping he might be able by a strategic movement to get her all to himself for a time.

"Not to-night, if you will excuse me," she answered, a little wearily.

"But we cannot excuse you," he said, with his usual tender air, which somehow or other made Noel feel irritated and annoyed.

"I am afraid you must."

"Won't you even favour us with one song, Miss Lister?" pleaded the Master of Penrith Castle, a smile on his dark face, which lit it up, and made him wonderfully handsome.

"Do you wish it?" she questioned, in a low tone, lifting her eyes to his.

"I do, indeed!" he answered in an equally low voice. "You're singing has a peculiar charm for me!"

"In that case, I will gratify your wish. What shall it be?"

He chose "Absent yet present," which she rendered in her usual finished style, and then turning, she asked him to sing.

"I know you do," she added with another soft look straight up into his eyes, a look that made his heart bound and his pulses throb. "Mrs. Rivers has told me so."

"Yes, I do a little," he admitted, reluctantly. "But I don't profess to be a singer."

"That is all the better. Now what will you try?"

"This," he answered, taking "With the sunshine and the swallows" from her hand, and placing it on the piano. "Will you accompany me?"

She assented at once, and played the opening bars. Then his voice, a fine baritone, rang through the room.

"And my heart will not be quiet,
But in a purple riot,
Keeps ever madly beating,
At the thought of that sweet meeting,
When my beloved cometh home to me."

"Mr. Penrith sings with great feeling, don't you think so?" asked the widow of Captain Beauchamp, who had come to sit beside her.

"Oh, yes! I suppose so," rejoined the lineaman, carelessly. "He certainly sang with great energy, as though he really meant it. I suppose he is going to become another captive of Miss Lister's!"

But the widow maintained a stony silence. Not even to herself would she acknowledge that her coveted prize was slipping from her grasp; and the gay captain, finding her dull and uninteresting, left her at last, and settled down by one of the Devereux girls.

Later that evening, as Edith sat out on the little balcony before her window enjoying the balmy coolness of the summer night, she heard the tread of heavy feet on the terrace walk beneath, and the murmur of masculine voices.

"Yes, she is very lovely!" she heard Beauchamp say. "But a dangerous woman—very dangerous!"

"Dangerous! What is there dangerous about her?" asked another; and she recognised the voice as Penrith's.

"Well, she has the *je ne sais quoi*, a nameless charm. Her beauty, too, grows on a fellow in such a way that he is hopelessly in love with her before he has any idea of it, and titillates at her mercy!"

"Indeed!" ejaculated Noel, with a laugh that sounded to the listener quite sarcastic. "I don't

think I should ever be hopelessly in love with a woman, and not know it."

"I am not so sure of that!" rejoined his companion. "And take care in the present case, my friend, or you will be a victim to her matchless beauty, and your belief in your own powers of resistance."

"Hardly! I don't think I shall ever be at any woman's mercy!"

And then they passed on, and Miss Lister with a shiver, which shook her slender frame from head to foot, went into her room, and drew the curtains across the window, and buried her face, which was strangely pale, in her hands, and remained thus till the grey light of early dawn stole dimly in.

CHAPTER IV.

THE days wore on quickly and merrily at Peyton Manor. The twelfth came, and Sir William and his guests were out early on the purple moors, and knocked over many and many brace of grouse and black game; as most of them were ardent sportsmen and some of them crack shots.

Among the latter Penrith ranked. Yet somehow or other, during those golden August days, his aim was far from sure or steady, and he made nothing like the bag that Beauchamp, Farrow, Aspinall, and even the elderly Beau Charteris managed to get.

Something seemed to come between him and the birds, as he raised his gun to his shoulder; the glint of chestnut tresses, and the remembrance of a cheek of waxen pallor, made him half blind and wholly careless.

As he went, stumbling knee-deep among the heather on the wind-swept moors, he carried with him always the memory of the tender look from a pair of lovely grey eyes; a look that had made his heart beat in a "purple riot," and his brain reel and swim, as it had never done before; a look that he longed and hungered to see again, at any pain and any cost to himself, if it were only once—once more, in his whole lifetime.

He, once the most ardent of sportsmen, was ever ready, long ere the last red streak of sunset glow faded from the skies, to return to the Manor.

He was never among the last to arrive in the library, where tea was dispensed by Lady Peyton; and where the gentlemen were allowed to come for their cheering and refreshing cup in shooting coats and thick boots, and signs of the toil of the day thick upon them; but was invariably one of the first, and would drop into an easy chair beside Edith, and talk to her in a low tone, utterly oblivious of the withering glances and heartbroken sighs with which Mrs. Rivers alternately favoured him.

Truth to tell, he had not behaved quite well to the little woman. In his infatuation for Edith he had quite forgotten his promise to teach her to ride and the smart habit the London tailor had sent was lying upstairs in a box; and was never likely to be donned by the frisky widow, or to be of the smallest use to her; but then that didn't matter much, as it was equally likely that it would never be paid for.

Penrith didn't think he had acted badly, as he really was not a conceited man, and had no idea that Mrs. Rivers was doing her best to entrap him.

His thoughts were of other things, chiefly about Edith.

"It is extraordinary," he would say to himself, "strange and extraordinary what an influence this woman exercises over me! I am drawn to her side against my will, and my better judgment. I care more for her opinion than I do for anyone else's, and feel that I would give almost my hope of another life in a better sphere to kiss those sweet lips."

It would be nearly impossible to describe his feelings at that time. He did not like Miss Lister's haughty tones and curt manner, and the way in which at times she reluctantly snubbed him.

He would make up his mind twenty times in a week to quit her vicinity and go to his lonely,

sea-washed Cornish Castle, and never see her again; but his resolve would vanish into thin air at one kind glance from the deep, gray eyes, one tender smile from the rosy mouth.

And at intervals, rare intervals, rare as the angels' visits, he got both tender smile and kind glance from this woman, who, to him, whatever she might have been to others, was a sort of problem in petticoats; for once or twice, on looking up suddenly, he had found her eyes on him, with such an expression in their limpid depths, that made him think she must love him, and then ten minutes after she would ignore his presence altogether, or speak to him in such freezing tones that he was glad when she turned her back on him and allowed Lord Farrow or Captain Beauchamp to monopolise her attention.

But he could not resist the charm of her wonderful white loveliness, and went to his fate in a blind, headlong way, as many a good man has done before.

"Are you alone, Miss Lister?"

Penrith's voice fell suddenly on her ear, and made her start violently. She was sitting in the octagonal boudoir, a beautiful room all panelled in purple velvet and gold, with a heavy tracery of gold leaves round the cornice and the doors, and running up the walls; the ceiling had been painted by a celebrated Italian artist, and represented Venus in a sea-shell drawn by Cupids.

Strewn about was costly *bric-à-brac* and rare china, and in the priceless vases were pale roses and stately dahlias.

It was a fitting shrine for a lovely woman, and Edith looked more than lovely, her clear-cut profile thrown out into strong relief by the background of heavy velvet drapery.

She had been thinking, sitting there in the dim twilight, watching the day die down in the western sky, flushed with the last rosy glow of sunset, and a dreamy look was in her eyes, as she gazed at Noel.

"Are you alone?" he repeated, looking in at the window, round which the vine-leaves clustered thickly.

"Yes," she answered, slowly and reluctantly, "I am alone."

"Then may I come and share your solitude?" and without waiting for permission, he stepped lightly through the long French window, and stood before her.

She made a half movement to rise, and then sank back among the soft cushions of the easy chair, in which she reclined, turning strangely pale, for she felt a crisis was at hand. For some days Penrith had been trying to entrap her into a *résumé*, and she had successfully avoided it, but now she knew she must listen to what he had to say, that there was no escape for her.

"Have I offended you?" he asked, looking down at her.

"No, why do you ask?"

"Because you have avoided me lately, and have been, I fancy, more cold towards me."

"I was not aware of it."

Her manner was icy and repellent; she was trying to stave off the declaration she saw was coming.

"Perhaps not, yet it has been painfully apparent to me. Your coldness makes me tremble for myself."

"Indeed! Then you cannot be a very brave man."

"Love, Miss Lister, like a guilty conscience, makes cowards of us all!"

"Indeed!" she said again, struggling hard for composure, and tearing her lace handkerchief to fragments in her agitation, "I never heard that before."

"Then let me tell you now," he said, gently, taking her hand in his, "what a coward my love has made of me—"

"No, no, don't," she interrupted, giving one entreating glance at the handsome face above her, and trying to draw away her hand.

"I have feared to speak of my affection lest you might think me presumptuous and daring—feared that I might startle you, and that

you would refuse to become my cherished, dearly-loved wife, and even withdraw from me what I possess now and prize so much, your friendship."

He paused for a moment, as though expecting her to speak, but she was silent and quiet, and did not try to release her fingers from his clasp.

"I have been faint-hearted," he went on, after awhile, "but I have taken courage now, and I dare to plead my cause with you. Once or twice I have fondly thought I was not utterly indifferent to you, and that has helped to make me brave. Tell me, am I?"

He bent down and tried to look into her eyes, but she turned her eyes away from him.

"Edith, dearest, answer me! Was I wrong in thinking I am not entirely indifferent to you?"

His words spoken so tenderly had a strange effect on her; they banished the spell his winning, high-bred voice was casting over her, and brought to her memory Marjory's unlucky words,—

"He would never ask a woman to be his wife unless he was pretty certain of her saying 'Yes.'"

She rose to her feet perfectly calm and collected and drew her hand from his, saying at the same time in quiet, cutting tones,—

"I regret to say that you were wrong."

"Wrong, Edith?" he ejaculated, his face becoming deathly pale under all its healthy sun-brown. "Wrong! Do you not care for me?"

"No!"

The word was short, sharp, cruel; he staggered under it as though from a blow.

"You can't mean that," he said, at last, rather faintly. "Only reflect, think what my love for you is—more to me than life! Give me a little hope. I will wait any time if you will come to me in the future. I can bear the dreariness of the years that must intervene."

"Impossible! I can give you no hope."

"You surely can't mean that," he repeated. "After what has passed between us, the encouragement you have given me, the hopes you have awakened, you can't mean to cast me off in this way!"

"I have given you no encouragement," she rejoined, with stinging contempt. "Your vanity has led you astray strangely. It is unparalleled impertinence on your part to imagine that I cared for you, or that it would please me to become your wife. How dare you insinuate such a thing!" she went on, looking at him with eyes full of wrath.

"Edith—I listen to me."

"No, I will not listen to you. Your proposal is an insult, simply an insult from a man who has declared openly that he would never woo a woman unless she gave him to understand plainly that she would feel grateful and obliged for the honour. I am neither the one nor the other."

"I see you are not," he said, quietly, biting his lip till the blood started, to steady its quivering. "I have made a mistake."

"You have—a very great mistake."

"My hopes are quite in vain?"

"Utterly and entirely. Nothing on earth would induce me to marry you. I fling you back your love with the contempt it merits."

"Thank you, Miss Lister. And this is your answer!"

"Yes. Does it satisfy you?"

"It more than satisfies me. I am quite content," he answered, with exceeding bitterness. "I shall not trouble you with my obnoxious ill-starred love in the future," and turning he left the room as he came.

For a minute or two Miss Lister stood, gazing steadily before her, then with a low moan of anguish she dropped on her knees, and buried her face in the soft cushions of the chair.

She had sold her heart's birthright for a miserable mess of pottage—gratified pride—and the gratification was likely to cost her dear. She knew now, in this hour of the triumph of her pride, and defeat of her love, that her heart belonged solely and wholly to Noel Penrith, and the dismal conviction was creeping over her that it would never return to her keeping, and she

wept bitterly as she had never wept before, at the ruin of her hopes, the ending of her lover's dream.

Edith was rather late at breakfast the following morning. She had passed a sleepless night, and when she came down, as bad luck would have it, the only chair vacant was one next Penrith, and she was obliged to take it. He, however, seemed to have recovered his usual composure, and was quite equal to the occasion. He wished her "good morning," gave her a liberal help of pigeon pie, passed her coffee cup, and crowned it all by making some remark about the weather.

Miss Lister, usually so cold and self-possessed, trembled and changed colour, and wished herself anywhere but beside her rejected lover.

"I'm sorry you must go, Noel," remarked Sir William, during breakfast, in a clear, loud voice. "Yes, so am I; but business must be attended to."

"Of course. Couldn't your steward do it, though?"

"Well, he might; still, I generally superintend these sort of matters myself."

"You are quite right. I hope, at any rate, that you won't go till to-morrow."

"If you wish it, I can manage to stay then."

"Edith!" said her ladyship abruptly, as they were left alone for a few minutes, "you have refused Noel Penrith!"

"And what if I have?" she asked, defiantly.

"What!" replied her sister somewhat astonished by her manner. "Why, I think you are the most foolish girl in the United Kingdom, and a very heartless one as well, for you led him on step by step, and have rejected as honest and true a love as ever was offered to woman. He worships the ground you tread on, and when I saw him this morning and he told me he must leave I knew it was your doing. You have disappointed me—disappointed me sadly."

"I never thought you could act in this unwomanly way. He is too good and noble to have received such treatment at any woman's hands," and, for the first time in her life, Lady Peyton looked rather coldly at her beautiful sister; and Edith, taking little Myrie by the hand, went out to a remote part of the terrace, and leaning there looked at the blue distant hills, while slowly the brimming tears gathered and fell, "spilling on her clasped hands."

"Auntie's crying," announced her niece to Marjory, as that wilful young lady joined them.

"Crying! Good gracious! Edith, what is the matter?"

"I am crying to expiate my sins and for my folly."

"What folly?"

"The bad way in which I have treated Mr. Penrith."

"What has he done?"

"He has proposed to me."

"And you—you haven't refused him, surely?"

"Yes, I have."

"Edith, you have never been so foolish!"

"Yes, I have, and why do you call me foolish? You told me of all his shortcomings, and advised me to lure him on to love me."

"I did, I did," acknowledged Marjory, deviously, "but I have found out since that I was wrong. He is neither a 'wretch' nor a 'cad,' but a gentlemanly, nice fellow, and I saw he adored you, and thought you would care for him, and that you had given up all idea of carrying out that foolish plan. Why, you haven't said a word about it for the last month! I quite thought you had relinquished all thoughts of it."

"I wish I had," said Miss Lister, with a sigh. "I should be much happier now if I had."

"I wish so, too. He is so good. I am horribly angry with myself for having misunderstood his jesting words. Who do you think it was headed the list for the Drossington burnt-out cottagers with five hundred pounds! Mr. Penrith. And he has given another two hundred towards the restoration of Peyton Church, and the Darrells, who live near his place in Cornwall."

say all his people simply worship him, and all run to greet him for—"

"Oul! don't, don't!" cried Miss Lister, covering her ears with her hands, "it is coals of fire heaped upon my head to hear the man I have scorned and rejected, and lost by my folly for ever, praised, and all his good qualities brought to light now when it is too late!"

"I dare say it's hard," said Miss Rainham, rather cruelly, considering she had been the cause of all the mischief, "but it's not more than you deserve, and—What is Joe running about in that mad style for, I wonder?" she concluded, abruptly, as her future spouse came out of the home-park, and ran towards the house as hard as he could. "What is it, Joe? what is the matter?" asked his intended, as she went to meet him.

"Willie has met with an accident."

"An accident! What has happened to him?" asked both Edith and Marjory together.

"He was riding down the Drossington-road, when his horse suddenly stumbled and fell, throwing him violently to the ground."

"Is he much hurt?"

"He is insensible at present, and we don't quite know the extent of his injuries, but we fear his leg is broken. Penrith and some of the others are bringing him up. You must go and see about getting a room ready, while I break it to Marian," and without more ado the young fellow went straight to Lady Payton's morning-room and told her of the accident, the news of which she received with outward calmness, though with a terrible inward fear, for she knew Sir William was a heavy man, and that such a fall might end fatally.

Her worst fears, however, were not realised. On examination it was found that the Baronet had broken his right leg and dislocated his shoulder. Beyond these the injuries were slight, and as the leg was skilfully set, he soon began to mend, and his wife's mind was set at rest.

His accident, however, caused some difference in the arrangements at the Manor. Penrith stayed on at the earnest request of his friend, and because he did not like to leave when he was in such a critical state, but most of the other guests left, including Mrs. Rivers and her fat poodle.

She left it not as she came though, for she went away the affianced wife of Mr. Devereux. She had given up all hope of catching Noel, and, therefore, had promised to take her elderly adviser, with his large estate and his large daughters.

So those that remained at the Manor were Edith, who could not of course leave her sister in her time of trouble, Marjory, who being Sir William's ward always made the Manor her home, Joe because Marjory was there, and Penrith, who stayed much against his will, because the sick man seemed to crave so much for his society.

CHAPTER V.

THE days wore away slowly, but surely, to some at Peyton Manor, and among these was Miss Lister.

It was simply agony to her to meet daily, nay, hourly, the man she had rejected with such unmerited scorn and contempt.

Her punishment was almost more than she could bear; she suffered the bitterness of death, when she met the glance of his eye, cold and meaningless, instead of full of passionate adoration as it had been.

His manner was perfect to her before others, easy and unembarrassed—he never noticed, or seemed to notice, the quivering of her lips when he spoke to her, or the paling of her cheek to ashen white, and its sudden flush at times; he was perfectly polite, and utterly indifferent; he ignored entirely their past pleasant intercourse, and its unlucky ending, consigning it to the limbo of oblivion.

And what is more galling to a woman than to be forgotten by the man to whom she was once all the world?

That she was forgotten, to all intents and pur-

poses, and that she was also unforgiven, Edith was sure of, for he never spoke to her save before others. He was cold and hard as marble when alone with her, and that checked her timid longing to ask for his pardon and plead for peace—only peace between them.

One day she managed to summon courage and spoke to him on the subject. He had come in from shooting, and made his way straight to the library for his usual cup of afternoon tea; she was kneeling on the hearthrug before the fire, for the late September days were getting chill and damp, and at first he did not see her, but the moment his eyes fell on the kneeling figure he rose to go.

"Mr. Penrith," she faltered, "will you stay—I—"

"Stay!" he interrupted, with contemptuous surprise. "No. Why should I stay?"

"Because—I—I—have something to say to you."

"To say to me? Impossible, Miss Lister, you must have made a mistake. You can have nothing to say to me!"

And without waiting for her to speak again he turned and left the room, and Edith buried her face in the fleecy hearthrug, and wept bitter tears of regret and repentance.

"I am afraid I have done a great deal of mischief about Mr. Penrith," said Marjory, rather diamally to her fiancé, a few days later, as they paced up and down the grey, moss-grown terrace-walk, before the house.

"I think you have, indeed, madame," rejoined Joe, severely.

Edith received a bad impression about him, all through me and that venomous little Rivers told. Had it not been for that, she might have loved and married him.

"She might have married him, but I am not so sure about the love."

"I am, and what is more, I'm sure she's in love with him now."

"Stuff! Women don't snub and act badly towards men they love. That theory's a rubbishy one. She's too cold to care for him or anyone else, for the matter of that."

Master Joe managed to throw a vast amount of derision into his voice and manner, and it made Marjory long to tell him of Edith's tears and repentance, but she felt it would be rather mean to do it, so held her peace and paced along gently beside him.

"Now, Noel is in love with her still, if you like," he went on, after a while.

"He manages to conceal it extremely well, then."

"Of course he does. He is very determined and brings his will to bear on it, and controls all outward sign, but he is not the same man. If I could believe in such a thing I should say his heart was broken."

"Then why, in the name of goodness, doesn't he try to make it up with her, and ask her to marry him again?"

"My dear Marjory, what a goose you are!" said her youthful lover, with a patriarchal air of wisdom and knowledge that was highly incensing to that young woman.

"And why am I a goose, pray?" she demanded, rather wrathfully.

"Because you know very little about men and their ways, so shouldn't talk about them."

"Oh, indeed. Perhaps it would be better if I knew nothing at all about them!" indignantly.

"Perhaps it would. A little knowledge is dangerous. But to explain to you why Noel won't try to make up his quarrel with Edith. No man likes to be snubbed. We dread it—the whole sex dreads it," and Joe flung his arms aloft, in such a frantic manner that his companion shrank away from him somewhat. "If you scorned me I should never get over it. I should turn woman-hater on the spot, and live in a tub like Diogenes. I'd never risk facing another fair one."

"Wouldn't you, really?"

"No, really I wouldn't, and I have no doubt that his sentiments are ditto, ditto. I am sure he proposed to her, although you keep so silent

on the subject, and she must have given him pepper-pot, or he wouldn't have found it necessary to want to go and attend to some imaginary business in such a hurry. It isn't likely he would ever give her a second opportunity of declining his hand and heart. He is too proud for that."

"Yes, I am afraid so," assented Marjory, with a doleful sigh.

"Why afraid?"

"Because she loves him, and will never care for or marry anyone else, and she'll be an old maid, and she's a great deal too lovely for that."

"Stuff! I tell you again, stuff! She is utterly indifferent to him. Her manner is ice itself."

"What would you expect it to be? Do you think a woman cares to wear her heart on her sleeve any more than a man does?"

"I don't know what they 'care,' I only know what they do, and I guess the heart is generally very much in evidence, when there is a heart in the question."

"You mean to insinuate that there is not a heart in this case?"

"Most assuredly not a female one."

"And I tell you you are wrong."

"And I tell you I am right."

"You are not, Joe, you are wrong; and it is abominable of you to go against me in this way, when I want to undo some of the mischief I have done."

"Well, we needn't quarrel," he said, stooping to kiss her, "and I'll do anything you wish me to."

"Will you? Really?"

"Yes, I will indeed."

"You'll try to make it all right between Mr. Penrith and Edith?"

"Yes, if I get the opportunity. But he never speaks of her to me. And good-bye, little one. I must be off now. There goes Noel with a whole tribe of dogs at his heels. Only two of us for the big shoot! How sorry I am Willie can't come and help to knock over his cherished pheasants."

"Yes, it must be a cruel disappointment for him, to be confined to his room just now."

"Awful, poor fellow. Good-bye, sweetheart. Be on the terrace to greet us when we return," and, waving his hand, the young fellow seized his gun and rushed after Penrith, who, surrounded by spaniels and gamekeepers was just entering the wood.

It was a brilliant October day, a bit of "Indian summer." The sky clear and cloudless, the air fresh and exhilarating.

The tawny wheat stubbles glistened like spun silk, the green was just getting flecked with gold, and here and there a dash of crimson; the hazel nuts hung in great brown inviting clusters, the honeysuckle was sparse and colourless, the rivulets were beginning to talk, and the runnels to brawl, the leaves were rustling down in showers, there was a thin blue haze lending a charm to the distant belt of hills, and everywhere were there signs of swift approaching autumn.

"This is splendid sport," said Joe, as he knocked over a fine cock pheasant, which the dogs had forced out of a ditch before him. "Beats the *battue* system hollow."

"Yes, rather," agreed Penrith; "that isn't sport, it does away with all the poetry of pheasant shooting. I wonder Willie advocates it so warmly."

"Well, you see, it's the fashion, for one thing," said his brother with a laugh. "And when you ask fashionable fops to a 'big shoot,' you must provide plenty of game for them."

"True. Still, I think quantity is no compensation for the loss of quality; and in the *battue* system much of the charm of field sport is destroyed without any real equivalent being gained."

"True, old man. There goes another fine fellow. This is splendid."

And Joe really seemed to find it so, for Penrith couldn't persuade him to desist until the dusky twilight began to creep over the face of the earth.

"Well, we've bagged twenty brace. That's pretty good for two," said Peyton, as he and Noel, shouldering their guns, set out on their homeward way.

"Very good indeed," assented the latter, and then, somehow or other, conversation languished between them, and they tramped on in silence, till they came in sight of the house.

"I am going through the hedge," said Joe, then, "it's much the shortest way. I see someone on the terrace, and Marjory promised to wait for me there," and he pushed through a gap.

"Take care how you come through," he called back. "Your gun is loaded."

But the warning came too late.

There was a sharp report, a heavy fall, then a groan, and Noel Penrith lay by the hedge-side with his white face turned up to the clear sky, where the stars were beginning to twinkle.

"Good Heavens!" cried Joe, flinging aside his gun, and falling on his knees by the wounded man, "are you much hurt?"

But no answer came from the pallid lips, and with a horrible fear tugging at his heart-strings, the young man turned and ran like the wind towards the Manor.

Only Miss Lister was on the terrace as he reached it.

"Edith," he said, trying to speak quietly, "a terrible accident has happened. Penrith has shot himself. You are always calm and self-possessed; go down and stay with him, while I fetch assistance. He lies by the hedge, in the home-field."

Miss Lister listened with horror-stricken eyes and a face from which every vestige of colour had fled; then as an arrow from a bow she sprang forward and flew, rather than walked, down the steps, across the lawn, through the garden to the home-field.

With unerring instinct she went straight to the spot, where the man she loved better than life itself lay so still, with the blood welling up from a wound in his left breast, and crimsoning the grass, and forming a ghastly pool under him.

She dropped down beside him, pillowing the heavy head on her lap, and trying to stanch the bleeding with her hands, the dawn of an awful agony at her heart, for she feared he was dead. She clasped his cold hands in hers, but there was no sign of life; and as she realised what existence would be without him, she bent down lower over the ashen face, on which the moonbeams played and wailed,—

"Noel, Noel, my beloved, my darling! Look up, speak to me. Oh! Heaven, have mercy and spare my darling."

As she spoke, the dark eyes unclosed slowly and languidly, and he looked up at the beautiful, piteous face above him. It was as though his soul had been recalled from the distant shore towards which it was wandering by the sound of her voice. It seemed to her a mute farewell, and bending still lower she kissed the rapidly chilling lips, ere he relapsed again into insensibility.

"Is he dead?" she asked, in a breathless whisper, as Joe appeared with the servants to bear him to the house.

"I fear so," he answered sadly, as he glanced at the rigid features, and without a moan or sigh Miss Lister fell unconscious beside the body of her lover.

"So, after all, she did care for him," muttered Joe. "What a pity she didn't show it before it was too late!"

For many weeks after that terrible day Noel Penrith's life trembled in the balance, and he hovered 'twixt life and death. He became delirious, and in his ravings showed plainly how his heart and soul were bound up in Edith. He would cry aloud for her, beseeching her to be kind to him, and not scorn him, and he would toss restlessly from side to side on his pillow, and moan grievously, until she came and held his hand, and soothed him tenderly. Her presence had a magical influence over him, and though an hospital nurse was brought from London, still the real nurse was Miss Lister.

It was fearfully painful to her to hear his in-

coherent ravings about herself; it was such a reproach, and yet she would hardly permit anyone to perform any service for him but herself. She wore herself to a shadow, tending him day and night. She anticipated every want, forestalled every wish, and when at last, after a day of awful agony, when the crisis came, and he was declared out of danger, the doctor said it was the constant care, and tender nursing that he had received which enabled him to pull through, and drift back slowly, but surely, to health and strength.

It gave unqualified pleasure and relief to all the inmates of the Manor to hear he was on a fair way to recovery—so none more than to Edith. It seemed to her a sort of expiation of her folly and heartless conduct. But from the day Noel recovered consciousness, and was pronounced out of danger she never went into his room save when he slept; then she would steal in and gaze lovingly and longingly at the white, wan face so thin and worn and changed, and weep silently.

November was far advanced before the invalid was strong enough to be brought downstairs, and then he walked but slowly, leaning on a huge stick, and sometimes helped by Joe's strong arm.

"We are a pair of cripples!" he said to his host on his first appearance downstairs after his recovery.

"Yes, indeed," assented the Baronet, with a cheery laugh, as he limped forward to meet his guest. "This broken leg is a sad thing for me. My wife is so nervous about me that she declares I mustn't don the pink for ever so long. I am afraid, therefore, that this winter will be a dull one for me."

(Continued on page 547.)

MADELINE GRANT.

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CHAPTER VIII.

"You see, my dear," proceeded Mrs. Penn, insinuatingly, "it's not everyone who would take you back under the circumstances," peering sharply over her spectacles.

("The circumstances of two hundred pounds," thought Madeline, bitterly.)

"Will you give me your word of honour, dear, you have not been doing anything unbecoming!—anything that—that would reflect on your reputation? My dear, don't look so red and angry. I'm only an old woman, and I mean no offence."

"No, I've done nothing to be ashamed of—that I shall ever blush for or regret," returned Madeline, heartily, "and to that I can give you my word of honour. You ask strange questions."

"Very well, my dear, very well. We did hear that you were in the mantle department in Marshall and Spoilgrove's. Many are ladies in these establishments, I know, and," craftily, "you have such a nice tall figure for trying on things."

"I wasn't there, Mrs. Penn," returned Madeline, sharply, "and I won't tell you where I was, beyond that I was with—with friends, and very poor."

"At Solferino-terrace?" sharply, making a note of the fact.

"Yes, at Solferino-terrace," with visible reluctance. "And now, what do you want with me, Mrs. Penn?" she asked, with sudden boldness.

"Well," clearing her throat, "I wish, and so does Rebecca, to let bygones be bygones, to let your father find you here, as if you had never been away, if you wish, for your escapade—although, of course, I believe you—might not sound well to him. No one knows why you left, except one or two—Selina and Mr. Murphy. No one need know. These girls are all a new lot, and have never heard of you; and your father, of course, won't meet them, for he is due home in the holidays. Do you agree to this?"

"Yes," returned Madeline, with sudden

pallor, but steady voice, "I agree to it; it will be best."

"That's settled, then," said the old diplomatist, very briskly. "And now about the money. What about that? Are we to keep the two hundred and fifty pounds, and give you your share?"

In former days Madeline would have assented at once, but now her heart beat quickly as she thought of Hugh and baby. She must secure all she could for them, and feeling very nervous, she replied, gently,—

"I don't see that, Mrs. Penn. To one year's payment you are entitled, of course; but for the last year I worked hard for my living—very hard. You can scarcely expect to take one hundred and fifty pounds as well as my services gratis."

Mrs. Penn had expected it—fully; and this was a blow.

Madeline was not as nice as she had thought, and she must really put more searching questions to her about her absence if she was going to be so keen about the money; and Madeline, blushing for very shame as she bargained with this old dame, yielded, half-reluctantly, eighty pounds for the year she had been pupil-teacher.

It was money versus character.

Mrs. Penn undertook to arrange Madeline's past very completely, and Madeline felt that it must be veiled, at least at present, from her father till Hugh was better, and able to work once more.

She had told him she would steal for him yesterday. Was not this as bad? she asked herself, guiltily, bargaining and chaffering thus over her father's money, and dividing it with the greedy old woman at her side?

However, she was to have one hundred and seventy-five pounds for her share. Oh, riches! Oh, what could she not do with that!

She was to return to her friends at Solferino-terrace for a fortnight.

Yes, she battled hard for the concession, and carried the day—was to return to Penchester House, and then to travel later on to Southampton.

After this exciting morning's business she was flushed, wearied, and had a splitting headache, and was not sorry to share Mrs. Penn's mould excellent tea, to be allowed to take off her dress, and go and lie down, which she did in a cool room upstairs, now empty (once very full), and had a long think and a long sleep, being quite worn out.

After dinner she went out with Miss Penn, and the money was paid over without delay, as she had taken care to stipulate.

She recognized a few old faces, she purchased a respectable hat, which she put on in the shop, and she heard that the Wolfertons had left the place, and gone no one knew where. She felt relieved.

Some old schoolfellows (now grown up), recognized her, and were glad to see her (these were day scholars), and remarked that she had also quite grown up, and looked older than she was, and a good deal altered.

She was staying at Mrs. Penn's, was she? and before they had time to ask the hundred-and-one questions they were charged with, Miss Penn prudently hurried her away, saying, as she did so,—

"Least said soonest mended. It's well you had on your new hat, my dear."

She did not feel as keen about the money as her mother, and she was anxious to be amiable.

Madeline, the heiress, had great possibilities in her power, and she was resolved to be friendly with Madeline, and to reinstate her as the popular pupil of former days (burying the teachers interlude in oblivion.)

The girls Madeline met went on saying to each other, with raised eyebrows,—

"Fancy that being Maddie Grant! How changed she looked! so old, and thin, and careworn, and she's only nineteen!—younger than I am."

"And so shabby!" put in another. "Did you see her dress—all creases, and the fashion of the flood?"

"And her gloves!"

Her gloves were apparently beyond description.

"All the same, Miss Penn was making a great deal of her, and it was dear this and love that. She does not become so affectionate all of a sudden for nothing. I wonder what it means! Perhaps Maddie had been left a fortune?" hazarded the sharpest of the party.

"Her dress and jacket looked like it!" answered No. 1. "And as to her hat, I saw it in at Mason's this morning, the very one, marked sixteen and elevenpence. That looks like being an heiress! Oh, dear me, very much so, indeed!"

The price of the hat settled the question.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Penn would not hear of Madeline returning to London by night.

No, it was not to be thought of. She must stay till the next day at least, and travel properly, which meant that Miss Penn herself conducted the heiress into Riverford personally, and saw her off by the midday express, first class.

It was in vain Madeline protested, and declared that such precautions were quite unnecessary.

She was anxious to save her fare, and return third, for even with such wealth as one hundred and seventy pounds every shilling would be wanted; but her voice was silenced.

Miss Penn carried the day, took her late pupil to the station, gave her into the care of the guard, and even went so far as to present her with a new two-shilling railway novel, to while away the time, an attention that she hoped would bear fruit in the coming by-and-by, but Madeline did not need it; her own thoughts were enough to absorb the whole of her attention, as she travelled quickly homewards.

She felt some disquieting pangs as she thought of Hugh. Would he be angry when he heard that his wife had once more assumed her maiden name, and pretended that she was still Madeline Grant?

He could not, he would not; he would forgive her, when there was so much at stake.

Her hand closed on her purse with tightening fingers—that precious purse, that contained the first payment for the fraud she had been forced to practise!

About seven o'clock on that hot June evening—so delicious, fragrant, and enjoyable in the country, so hot, and stuffy, and exhausting in the narrow street embellished by Solferino-terrace—Madeline's quick foot was once more heard running up the stairs, and with hasty fingers she opened the sitting-room, and rushed into her husband's presence.

He was sitting up dressed—(at the all but worst of times he would insist on dragging himself out of bed and dressing)—sitting at the open window, trying to catch a breath of air, and laboriously doing some "copying" with slow and shaky fingers.

It should here be stated that, to do Mrs. Penn justice, she had passed Madeline under the harrow of searching inquiries, and elicited the intelligence that she made her livelihood by copying law papers, and was satisfied that it was a respectable employment.

"Ah!" exclaimed the astute dame. "I suppose Mr. Glyn put that bit of work in your way—did he?"

Fortunately for her new *ride*, Madeline could truthfully reply "No," for it was not Hugh who had been the means of procuring this occupation, such as it was, but Mr. Jessop.

"You will give me your permanent address, Madeline!" said Mrs. Penn, authoritatively. "That must be understood."

"You have it, Mrs. Penn, already."

"Have you lodged there long?" she asked, feeling that no well-known counsel at the Old Bailey could possibly outdo her in crafty questions.

She had found out all she wished to know.

Madeline's past career was as clear as daylight to her now. Was it?

"Eighteen months!" said her ex-pupil, rather shortly.

"Then you were pretty comfortable!"

To which Madeline evasively replied,—

"That she had been quite happy!" (no thanks to Mrs. Kane).

And now behold Madeline at home once more, flushed with excitement, exhilarated by the change—by the money in her purse—and with her bright eyes, bright colour, and new hat making quite a cheerful, brilliant appearance before her amazed and languid invalid.

He was looking very ill to-day. These hot, close, sleepless nights were gradually sapping his little stock of vitality.

"Baby is asleep," she said, looking over eagerly into the cradle, "and now I am going to tell you all about it," taking off her hat and gloves, pushing away her husband's writing materials, filling him up a glass of port-wine, fetching a biscuit for him, and taking a seat opposite to him in the window—all within three minutes.

"You have good news, Maddie, I see," he remarked, as he looked at her and noticed her condition of suppressed excitement and her sparkling eyes.

"Good news!—yes, and money!" pulling out her purse, and displaying thick rolls of Bank of England notes and a few shining sovereigns. "Oh, Hugh, dear, I feel so happy—all but in one little corner of my conscience, and I'm afraid you will be angry with me about something, that's the one drawback. I—I don't know how to begin to tell you—best begin with the worst. I've gone back to being Madeline Grant once more; they don't know that I'm married."

"Madeline!" he ejaculated sternly.

"Now don't, dear. Don't speak till you hear all. You know how I left, how I travelled with the price of my rings. I arrived, was taken up to Mrs. Penn's own room, and we had a long, long talk. She has had a stroke! Miss Selina is married and gone. Her school is not doing well."

"So when Mrs. Penn got a letter from papa lately, enclosing three hundred and fifty pounds for two years' expenses, and one hundred for me, it was very welcome, and they were anxious to find me, of course," pausing for a second to take breath. "Don't interrupt me yet," she pleaded, with outstretched hands. "Mrs. Penn gave me papa's letter to read. He had been ill—he had lost money—he had not wished to write till he was rich—and now he is a millionaire, and is coming home very shortly, expecting to find me still at the Penn's."

"I am to be a great heiress, to keep his house; and, Hugh, dear, actually he had heard a hint of you—where or how I can't imagine—and oh! he he would not believe it, and says dreadful things if I marry a poor man, as he has such—such ambition for me."

"If I disappoint him I am to be turned from his door without a penny; to earn my own bread!"

"As you are doing now," observed her husband hastily.

"Yes," but with a gesture of despair, "and what is it? For you and me and baby; what are twelve shillings a week! Then Mrs. Penn exclaimed, with great delight, 'At least you are not married,' pointing to my hand, and then it all came into my mind with a flash! I did not say I was not."

"I told no actual untruth, Hugh, but I let her think so. The temptation was too great; there was wealth for the taking—money that will bring you health. I said I would steal for you, Hugh, but it was not stealing; it was, in a sense, my own, intended for my use, by papa. Are you angry with me for what I have done, dear?" she wound up, rather trivially.

"No, Madeline. I see that you could not help yourself, my poor child, with starvation staring you in the face, and a sick husband and an infant to support. As far as I am concerned it will not matter," he added, significantly. "It won't be for long, and your father will forgive you. But the child, Maddie! On his account your marriage—"

"Hugh!" she nearly screamed, "don't! Do you think the child would make up for you! Am I not doing all this for you? Acting a part—clothing myself in deceit—for you, only for you! Do not tell me," wringing her hands, "that it is all to go for nothing! If I thought that I would give it up—at once, too! My only object is to gain time and money until you are yourself once more, and able to earn our living at your profession."

"Then, having done all I can to smooth the way, I shall confess my marriage to papa. If he renounces me I shall still have you, and you have me! But without this money to go on with, to get you a good doctor, change of air, and plenty of nourishment, I don't know what I should do," frantically. "It has come to me like a reprieve to a criminal! Say, Hugh, that I have done right; oh, please say it!" laying her trembling hand on his arm.

"No, dear Maddie, I cannot say that, but I will say that it was a great temptation—that under the circumstances it was almost irresistible."

"Then say you are not angry with me, at least!"

"I can say that, Maddie, from the bottom of my heart. How could I be angry when it has all been done for me! The only thing is, that, under some circumstances, there may be a difficulty later on" looking into the future with his practical lawyer's eye; "that there may be great difficulties and a very desperate entanglement in store for you, my pretty reckless Maddie. You know the lines,—

"Oh, what a tangled web we weave
When once we practice to deceive."

"At least I shall make the best of the present moment," said his wife, springing up. "I'm going to take Mr. Jessop into my confidence!"

"Are you? Well I suppose it will be best!"

"Yes, of course it will. I'm going to write to him now. The best doctor in London is to come and see you, and as soon as you can be moved you go into the country that I insist on."

"Go into the country, do I?" he returned, with a smile.

But he was saying to himself as he looked at her eager anxious face, that the only country he would ever go into now would be down to the old burying-place of the Glyn family—at least his relations could not deny him admission there.

And when he was at rest, under the walls of the old ruined church, Madeline, as a widow, would be as much her father's heiress as if she had never been otherwise than Madeline Grant.

Yes, his death, though she would not think it at the time, poor child, would open a door of escape from her present dilemma, and was the best thing that could happen for her. As to himself, he was now reduced to such a low physical and mental ebb that he was indifferent in the matter.

To return to life, active life, and take up his heavy load and plod on like a horse in a mill was not an alluring prospect. Madeline was safe now, and he would rather be lying under the green sod down in Surrey, among his own kindred, "where after life's fitful fever they slept well."

It will be seen that Mr. Glyn was in a bad way—too weak, too hopeless, even to care to struggle back to health—but Madeline had now sufficient energy for two.

Hope pervaded her young veins, decision and prompt action were its outcome, and money was power.

In the first place she scribbled a hasty note to Mr. Jessop, and begged him to call on them that evening without fail. This she sent by a little boy, paying a precious sixpence to save time.

Then she descended like a whirlwind on Mrs. Kane, and begged to see her for a moment alone.

She had made a bold resolve, but there was nothing else for it. She was going to take Mrs.

Kane, the insolent, the red-faced, the incredulous, into her confidence.

She had Hobson's choice—no other alternative. Supposing inquiries were made—supposing Mrs. Penn wrote and asked awkward questions—who so ready to answer them unless previously warned, previously bribed, previously flattered by being let into the secret, as Mrs. Kane!

"Mrs. Kane," said Madeline, shutting the lady's door, the door of her once sanctum, "I have something to say to you—in private."

"Bless me, Mrs. Glyn! how red your face is!" interrupted the other, tartly, having been just sitting down to her supper in the kitchen. "Whatever is the matter now! Not bailiffs that I do hope."

"No, no! quite the other way," and, struck by a happy idea, "how much do we owe you now, Mrs. Kane!"

"Ah! let's see—thirteen weeks," with great promptness, "at ten shillings—that's sixteen—coals. Here," making a raid upon a rickety writing-table, "I have it all down," searching among some papers. "Yes, here it is—total, eight pounds eleven shillings and fourpence. Are you going to settle it?" she asked, briskly.

"Yes, I am!" returned Madeline, now drawing out her purse—her bursting purse—which Mrs. Kane gazed at with eyes as distended as those of a bull-frog, and her mouth half open. "A ten-pound note, Mrs. Kane!" tendering it as she spoke.

"So I see," in a milder tone. "I'll get you change; and, though I say it as shouldn't, it's not everyone—you know yourself—who would have—"

"Yes, quite true. I know all that; I thank you very much, Mrs. Kane. Never mind the change at present, it can go to the milk bill. What I wanted to speak to you about is to tell you a family secret that concerns me."

"A family secret! Laws, Mrs. Glyn!" suddenly seating herself with a kind of plunge, and looking at her lodger with a countenance of dignified, but delighted anticipation. "Whatever can it be?"

"Promise, on your solemn honour, not to tell anyone!"

"Oh! I'm as safe as a church. I promise no one will get anything out of me; unless it's something not on the square."

"It's all right. You need not fear. I was a Miss Grant."

"So you told me," nodding her head.

"I was at school near Riverford for a good many years. My father is a merchant in Jamaica—very rich."

"Oh, indeed!" in a comfortable tone.

"But for two years he had not been heard of, and we thought he was dead, and I became a teacher at school. Mr. Glyn saw me there, paid me attention, which displeased Miss Penn very much, and I was sent away, and I married him; we have been here ever since."

"So you have," agreed Mrs. Kane, as much as to say, "and it's highly to your credit."

"Well, now my father has written at last. He is coming home immensely rich. He has not heard of my marriage."

"Laws!" ejaculated Mrs. Kane, in a tone of admiration and astonishment.

"No, no one has. I had no friends. And if he knew I had married a poor man he would not have anything to do with me, he would be so angry; at least, at first. I went down to Mrs. Penn's; she showed me my father's letter. She thinks I'm not married, for," holding up her hand, "I pawned there to pay my railway fare."

"Oh! gracious mercy! Did you really?"

"And she took it for granted I was still Madeline Grant. I said nothing. I told her I had lived here for eighteen months. I told her I worked at law stationery, and was very poor, and she was apparently satisfied; but I believe she will write and ask you all about me all the same, and now you are quite prepared. I am Miss Grant, you know, who have lived here for a year-and-a-half—you understand!"

"Yes; and a nice quiet respectable young lady, eh! I'll give it her all pat, you be quite

certain," put in Mrs. Kane, rubbing her arms, and in a state of the liveliest delight at her own rôle in the piece. "And how about Mr. Glyn and the baby?" she asked, slyly.

"You need not mention them. It will be all right later on, when I see papa and prepare him, you know. But now I'm obliged to keep him in the dark, or Mrs. Penn would not have given me my money if she had known. It's only for a time that I'm forced to go back to my old name, and I assure you, Mrs. Kane, it's not very pleasant."

"Aye. I think it's rather a joke; somewhat like a play on the stage, where, in the end, the father comes in and blesses the young couple, and they all live happy ever after. That will be your case, you'll see," emphatically.

"I hope so, but I doubt it," said Madeline. "I will be quite content if my husband gets better. Money is nothing in comparison to health."

"Aye, yes! but money's a great comfort all the same," said Mrs. Kane, crumpling up the note affectionately in her hand, and wondering how many more Madeline had in her purse of the same quality,—"a great comfort."

"Well, then, now you know all, Mrs. Kane," said the other, rising. "I can depend on you. You be our friend in this matter, and, believe me, you shall be no loser."

"Well, certainly, you can't say fairer nor that, can you, ma'am. And as for the secret, wild forces wouldn't draw it from me; and I'm that interested in you, as I couldn't express to you, and allus was, just as if you were my own daughter. And I can't say fairer nor that, can I!" opening the door with a wide flourish—which admitted a powerful smell of fried fish, Mrs. Kane's supper—and waving Madeline through, who, rather staggered by this unexpected compliment, passed quickly into the lobby, with an impressive little nod, and once more hurried back to her family in the upper regions, and set about getting tea, and making preparations for the expected arrival of their councillor-in-chief, Mr. Henry Jessop.

CHAPTER X.

Mr. Jessop duly arrived, and found, to his amazement, that his fish and grapes had been forestalled, and that there were other and greater surprises in store for him.

He listened to Madeline's plainly-told tale, with his glass rigidly stuck in his eye, his mouth screwed up, as if he had an unusually intricate "case" under his consideration.

He did not interrupt her till it was all finished, and she, in the heat of her narrative, had permitted him to know more of their poverty than she had dreamt of.

The Glyns were as proud as they were poor, their pinching was kept for their own exclusive knowledge.

Mr. Jessop gave a little gasp as he listened to the revelations of the pawnbroker's shop, the history of the rings and miniature.

"By the way, I'm going to redeem them the first thing to-morrow," said Madeline, quickly.

"No, no, no! My dear Mrs. Glyn, such places for you are simply out of the question. I will go," said Mr. Jessop, who had never been in such an institution in his life.

"Oh, no, certainly not! I don't mind one bit. It's for the last time, and why should it be more out of the question than yesterday! Does money make such a difference all at once?"

On the whole, Mr. Jessop approved. It was rash, romantic, and risky; but it was the only plan he could see for the present.

Mrs. Glyn must take her father in hand and talk him over. He did not think she would have much trouble, he added, consolingly, as he looked at her pretty animated face, and told himself that the old chap must be very stony-hearted if he could resist that.

And now for business, for action, for a council of war.

In a quarter-of-an-hour it was all settled, so unanimous were Madeline and Mr. Jessop.

A great doctor, whose speciality was low fever, was to be summoned the very next morning. If he agreed, Mr. Jessop was to come in the afternoon with a very, very easy open carriage, and take the invalid at once into the country, to a farm-house that he knew of about fifteen miles from London, where there was pure air, pure milk, and every incentive to health.

The baby and Madeline were to follow by train, after everything had been packed up and stored with Mrs. Kane, who was now amenable to anything, and amiable to imbecility.

The journey did take place, by very slow and easy stages, and, actually, the next night Mr. Glyn slept under the thatched roof of the farm, worn out by fatigue, and slept well, slept till the crowing of the cocks and lowing of the cows had long previously announced that day was commenced for them.

He sat in his lattice-paned sitting-room, looking into the gay, old-fashioned garden, filled with hollyhocks, lavender, china roses, and many sweet-scented flowers, well-beloved of the bees, and felt better already, and made an excellent early dinner; although his portly hostess declared in the kitchen, as she carried away the dishes,—

"That the poor sick gentleman—and, aye, deary me! he do look bad!—had no more appetite than a canary."

The sick gentleman's wife and baby appeared on the scene in the course of the afternoon, "a rare, pretty, tall young lady, she were," quoth the farm folks.

A country girl undertook the infant, who, as long as he had plenty of milk in his bottle, and that bottle in his clutch, was peaceable and contented with things in general, and much taken with Mrs. Holt's cap, with her tin dishes ranged on shelves in the kitchen, and with various other new and strange objects.

Madeline was delighted to get into the peaceful country, with its placid green fields and hedges, to Farmer Holt's old red-roofed farm, with its sunny garden and clipped yew trees, and big pool at the foot of it, overshadowed by elder trees—to come to this haven of rest, away from dusty, hot London, with its roar of hurrying existence and dizzying street traffic that never seemed to cease night nor day, near Solferino-terrace.

Here the emulous lusty crowing of rival cocks, the lowing of distant cows, the noise of the churn, or the mowing machine were the only sounds that broke a stillness that was as refreshing as it was majestic.

All things have an end. Madeline's fortnight soon came to a conclusion, and she very, very reluctantly tore herself away from the farm the evening before she was due at Penchester House.

How happy she was here—why must she go! Hugh was better—a great deal better. He walked into the garden, leaning on her arm at first, then in the lanes and fields with no support but his stick.

He was more hopeful, more like his former self. He was actually engaged in trying flies for the burly farmer, as Madeline looked at him wistfully, with her chin resting on her hand.

She loved the farm itself, the farmer's wife, kind Mrs. Holt, with a heart to match her ample person; the sweet little chickens, and ducks, and calves, and foals were all delightful to Madeline, who, active as ever, helped to feed the former, learned to make butter, to make jam, to make girdle cakes, to milk the cows, and was on foot from six in the morning till nine o'clock at night, and had recovered her look of youth and health that had been so long missing from her appearance.

The farmer himself was to drive her to the station in his trap, and she and Hugh walked down the lane together in the cool evening hour to say a few last words before they parted—for how long!

Hugh was hopeful now, and Madeline despondent. He was getting much better, and felt more self-reliance every day. He would soon, please goodness, be back at work again.

"I don't know what has come over me, Hugh," said Madeline, as they came to a stop at the



MADDIE LOOKED BACK AND WAVED HER HANDKERCHIEF.

gate. "I feel so low; something tells me that I shan't see you again for a long, long time"—her eyes filling with tears—"and I feel so nervous about meeting papa," her lip quivering as she spoke.

"Nonsense, my darling! you must not meet misfortune half way. Your father can't but be pleased to see you, and if when you tell him about me—"

"Oh, but I won't. I dare not at first," she interrupted, hastily.

"Well, when you do, point out to him that his silence for two years left you to a certain extent your own mistress, and that your unlucky marriage was the result of his thus leaving the reins on your neck."

"Now, Hugh"—putting up her hand—"you know I won't listen to that. If the worst comes to the worst I can run away."

"So you can, and I think in about another fortnight I shall be fit for harness again. Jessop says—"

"If Mr. Jessop says anything so wicked he and I will quarrel!" exclaimed Madeline, indignantly. "You are not to do anything for three months. There is a good deal of money left yet."

"Yes, but, Maddie"—producing some notes—"you know you can't appear before your father like that!"—pointing to her dress—"you must get a couple of decent gowns. You must take twenty pounds at the least, without any nonsense, you know."

"I won't"—pushing it rudely away—"I don't want it."

"But you do! and you must take it, and do as I desire you. Goodness knows it is little enough, and promise me to spend it all on yourself. You must be decent when you go to meet your father. You can see that for yourself. And if—if, Maddie, you tell him, as you should soon, my dear, and he is very angry, why you can always come home to me"—kissing her—"and, indeed, now that I'm not so awfully down on my

luck, and feel that I can work for you once more, the sooner you come back the better."

"Here's Holt!" as the farmer and trap, and a long-tailed colt, came quickly round the corner into view. "He is driving the four-year-old! I hope he will take care of you, Maddie. Mind you leave her there safely, Farmer"—as the colt would hardly stand, helping his nimble wife up into the lofty trap—"Good-bye, Maddie; be sure you write to-morrow," stepping back, as they dashed through the gate, carried forward by the impetuous chestnut.

Maddie looked back and waved her handkerchief. He was still standing at the gate looking after them when they had gone quite a long way, and then she applied it to her eyes.

"Don't take on, ma'am," murmured the farmer, his gaze fixed on the colt's quivering ears, "we'll take care of him. He's a real nice young gentleman; and as to baby, I don't see as how the misus will ever part with him. You cheer up! Aren't you going to meet your father?"

"Yes, Mr. Holt," she faltered, "but I may tell you that he has not seen me for nine years. He—I—we thought he was dead. He does not know that I'm married."

"Oh, murder!" exclaimed Mr. Holt, emphatically.

"No, not yet, and is not to know at present. I'm just Miss Grant now, not Mrs. Glyn. I told your wife. She knows."

"I don't see what your father can have to say against Mr. Glyn," indignantly. "He's a gentleman. The king himself is no more."

"Ah, yes, but he has no money," faltered Madeline.

"Maybe he has brains; that does as well. Don't let your father come between you. You know the Bible says—"

"Mr. Holt!" she exclaimed, flushing indignantly, "do you think I would ever desert Hugh? No, not for fifty fathers! No, not if my father came here to me all the way from London on

his knees would I ever really leave Hugh and baby!"

"Yes, I'm sure you wouldn't! excuse me. But, you see, your father's very rich, and you are wonderful pretty, and when the old gent, meaning no offence, has you living in a kind o' palace, with servants, and carriages, and horses, and tricked out with dress and jewels, and everyone pushing and jostling each other to tell you what a grand, beautiful young lady you are—why, maybe, then you won't be so much for coming back. You know it would be only human nature—at least woman's nature," coolly correcting himself.

"Well, Mr. Holt," she returned, rather stiffly, "time will tell. I cannot say more than that," unintentionally quoting Mrs. Kane. "If I know myself I shall come back, and soon, and here's the station. Remember"—stopping as she jumped down, and held his horny hand in her clasp—"remember," she repeated, looking up into his honest, rugged face, with dim and wistful eyes, "I leave them in your charge. Don't let Hugh overtire himself, don't let him walk in the sun, don't let him make hay, don't let baby have a penny to play with again, nor the toasting-fork, and—oh, I must be going. Remember, above all, that I shall soon come back."

Exit Miss Grant, hurriedly rushing for her ticket, and the farmer, fearing the effect of the train for the first time on his rampant colt, prudently turned his head homewards without further delay.

(To be continued.)

The most remarkable canal in the world is the one between Worsley and St. Helens, in the north of England. It is sixteen miles long, and underground from end to end.

BEAUTIFUL lives have grown up from the darkest places, as pure, white lilies, full of fragrance, have blossomed on almy, stagnant waters.



JOSIAH NATHAN LOOKED AT MISS NAIRN GRIMLY.

POOR LITTLE DOROTHY.

CHAPTER II.

THE unrepining old man glanced at Violet Nairn with his hawk-like eyes. To begin with, she was utterly unlike any of his usual visitors. Next, she seemed to have a faith in her own powers of persuasion none of them possessed, poor souls! For one moment Mr. Nathan felt almost inclined to yield and wait just a few weeks longer for the money of which he stood so little in need. Then business instincts and the habits of long years triumphed, and he said shortly "Mr. Nairn knew our rules when he borrowed the money, and if he fails to keep up the instalments he must abide by the consequences."

"But illness is the cause of the delay," pleaded Violet. "And, oh! you cannot think what it means to us. If you take away our furniture we shall be homeless."

"You should have thought of that before," said the Shylock grimly. "What would become of me, I wonder, if I let everyone who borrowed money of me go scot free? I should end my days in the workhouse, I fancy."

Violet made one more effort. She thought of those at home, and dreaded returning to confess her errand had been a failure. She fixed her beautiful brown eyes full on the usurer's face and tried one last appeal.

"Only give us time," she besought him. "My father is a classical tutor, and it would be ruin to him to lose his furniture. No pupils would come to him in rooms, and we should have to go into lodgings if you took away our goods. Besides," she added, naively, "though we are fond of the things they are very old and shabby; it would surely pay you better to wait a little longer and receive your debt in money."

The old man looked at her grimly. Josiah Nathan was not at all bad, few people are, and he had two distinct causes of gratitude to Miss Nairn. She did not cry (he hated tears, and

declared that his office felt damp for hours after a call from a weeping debtor), and she did not take it for granted that as a money-lender he must be heartless. Most of Nathan's debtors when unable to pay their dues reproached him and called him names. This girl did nothing of the kind, and he felt a kind of surly respect for her forbearance.

"Sit down," he said, quietly, wiping the dust from an office stool with his pocket-handkerchief, (a very unusual attention). "You seem a sensible young woman, and I'll put the matter in a nutshell. Suppose I agree to wait three weeks, have you any certain hope of paying me in that time, or should you come here again with the same story? If you know you will have the money by a certain date it's one thing, if you've only vague hopes of it it's another, and you must know it's three weeks over due now. In a matter of two months or so the next instalment will be due."

"This is the thirtieth of August," said Violet, quietly. "My father has a brother in good circumstances at the Cape, and he has written to ask him for help. We feel quite sure it will not be refused. Father calculated if my uncle were at home when the letter arrived we might hear by the fifth of September, if he were away it would be a week later."

"If I agree to wait to the fifteenth of September will you promise that if the money is not forthcoming then you will not come here with another petition for time?" said Nathan. "I'd have you to understand, Miss Nairn, I'm straining a point to oblige you as it is."

"I am quite sure the money will come," she answered.

"But if it doesn't?"

"If it does not we shall know that, as you said just now, business is business, and you must claim your due. You need not be afraid of my coming with fresh entreaties, Mr. Nathan. Uncle James is our only hope. If he fails us ruin must come."

"Are there many of you?" asked the usurer, half curiously.

"Eight, I am the eldest. We have not a single relation or powerful friend in England. We have been poor ever since I can remember. I daresay you come across a good many cases like ours in your business; but it's hard all the same."

"I daresay. Well, Miss Nairn, tell your father I'll wait till the fifteenth of September. If I hear nothing from him by the sixteenth the law must take its course."

Violet Nairn did not understand much about business, but she had a vague consciousness that the money-lender had acted generously, and she put out her little hand gratefully.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Nathan. I feel sure Uncle James will send the money; but if he doesn't," and she tried to smile, but the attempt was a pitiful failure, "why the furniture won't get much shabbier than it is now."

She went down the grand old staircase and out into Triton-street with a very sore feeling at her heart. It was a comfort to have gained so much grace, and Uncle James had never failed them yet; but all the same it was cruelly hard to have had to appeal to the money-lender's charity, and—well, Violet had a fit of the blues, perhaps, just then, for she actually wondered to herself whether life was worth the living.

She had known poverty ever since she could remember. True they had never been in quite such straits as this before, but the two ends of income and expenditure had always declined to meet comfortably, and had needed an incessant tugging at the two extremities to reduce the gap between. She could never remember when life had not been a struggle. She loved her parents dearly, and was devoted to the children, but at times she longed for a taste of pleasure, for a glimpse of the gay world.

Brixton was monotonous, and to a poverty-stricken family like the Nairns, terribly lonely. Violet had yearnings after books and music, society and amusement. This lovely August weather, when

their small suburban house seemed stifling, even a day at the sea would have been delightful; but alas! such luxuries were impossible.

She decided to walk to London Bridge Station; but it was further than she had expected, and by the time she reached it she felt so tired she could hardly stand. A strange giddiness seized her, and instead of inquiring when her train started she could only just stagger to the ladies' waiting-room and sink into a seat, so tired and faint that she feared to fall if she tried to move.

It was not surprising after all; she had tasted nothing since the meagre family dinner at one. She had gone through a good deal of bodily fatigue and a terrible mental strain, so perhaps it was to be expected when the reaction came she would collapse.

She sat motionless in her chair. It was long past five, and a cup of tea would have revived her; but beyond the half of her return ticket there were only a few pence in her pocket, and even if she could have walked to the cheerful-looking refreshment bar she had no idea what they would charge, so the only thing she could do was to sit on and hope, that the rest would soon make her better.

She had entered the first-class waiting-room in spite of her third-class ticket; not with any idea of breaking the railway company's regulations, but simply because it was nearer than any other, and she could not trust her strength to last much longer. One or two of the people who passed and repassed looked curiously at the pale girl in the corner, but no one spoke to her, and Violet must have been there twenty minutes before a lady, more richly dressed than any of those other passers-by, questioned the attendant in a low tone about her.

"No, ma'am," said that functionary in the same tone. "I never saw her before. No; I don't think she's ill; you'd be surprised the many people we have who come here and sit for an hour or more, just waiting for someone. If their friend comes they go off joyfully, if not—we'll it makes one sad to see their disappointed faces. Thank you, I am sure, ma'am," and she pocketed a silver trifle from the lady's hand.

The big room was almost empty; a departing train had carried off some dozen of its late occupants, when Violet suddenly felt a hand laid on her shoulder, and, looking up with a nervous start, saw a lady standing beside her with a face of kindly concern.

"I am afraid you are not well," it was the same voice which had just spoken to the attendant. "I have been watching you some time, and you have not stirred; do you feel faint?"

Violet Nairn saw in her questioner a lady of middle age; from her unlined face and slender figure, her almost satin-like skin, she might have passed for thirty-five, but there was something in her authoritative manner, her quiet dignity and her evident accustomedness to command which augured she was really older than she looked. She was very handsome, most evidently a lady, and her manner was kindness itself; but Violet's heart did not go out to her. The brilliant black eyes almost fascinated her gaze, but yet her chief feeling towards the stranger was fear.

"I feel very tired," she said slowly, impelled to answer the lady's question by the magnetic glance of those wonderful eyes, "and when I got in here I turned so giddy that I thought I had better rest a little."

"Have you far to go?" asked the stranger. "Not very far. I live at Brixton."

"And your mother is Marjory Nairn," said the lady; "my dear, do not look so frightened. I was one of her schoolfellows, and I knew you at once by your resemblance to her; though," with a smile, "she was more of a rose, and you seem like a lily."

Violet felt deeply interested. All the Nairn children knew their father's history perfectly. He and his brother had been left orphans in early youth, and were adopted by the different sides of the family. Percy fell to a maiden aunt, resolved to "make a parson of him," but after giving him a university education she died just before he was ordained, and having some scruples about a

profession, he dropped the idea of taking Holy Orders, and preferred to turn to teaching.

James had emigrated with his uncle, and became a farmer in a big way in Cape Colony. He had certainly prospered better than his brother. But the interest of this afternoon's meeting to Violet was that though thus familiar with their father's past none of them had ever heard about their mother's youth. Marjory Nairn never willingly spoke of the past. Her recollections seemed to go back no farther than her wedding day. Her children had never heard her maiden name, or where her childhood was spent. She never mentioned a single relation, and Violet felt positive none could be living, or she would certainly have applied to them in the present difficulty.

But Violet had acquired—she knew not how—the impression that Mrs. Nairn came of a far better family than her husband, and that in her girlhood she had moved in very different circles from any her children knew. She was a patient, careful, self-sacrificing woman; but there was a shade of secrecy in her nature which rather repelled her children. Perhaps this explained why the shabby little band loved their father best, while they all rapturously admired their mother.

Violet looked into the strange lady's face with a radiant smile.

"Did you really know mamma?" They always say at home that I am like her."

"You are her image. It is twenty years since I saw her, but I remember her perfectly. We have lost sight of each other strangely, for the last time I heard of her she was living at Brighton."

"That was a long time ago," explained Violet. "I can hardly remember it, and I am the eldest."

"And how many are there?"

"Eight."

The lady threw up her hands. "Eight children! I can't fancy Marjory with a large family. I was just going to have some tea when I met you. Will you come and share my repast, then I shall hear more about my old friend?"

Violet agreed at once. She said afterwards she never saw anything strange in the invitation.

"I must tell you my name," said her hostess, as they sipped their tea and discussed cold fowl and ham at a round marble-topped table. "though I can hardly hope that you have heard it. I am Mrs. March now, but in the old days I was Marion Deloraine."

Violet had never heard either name, and said so frankly, adding—

"Mother never talks of the past, and you see, there is so much to do she has very little time for letter-writing, perhaps that is why she has lost sight of you."

Mrs. March was a woman of wonderful power. She asked not a single question which could wound or annoy Violet, but her gentle caressing manner seemed to impel confidence, and before their tea was finished she had a very good idea of the straits of her old schoolfellow.

"You must keep up your courage, my dear little girl," she said, kindly; "the clouds will roll by, and a bright future be in store for you. I am so glad to have met you. I have put down your mother's address here," and she touched her pocket-book, "and I shall write to her soon. Now, I am going to send you home in a cab, for I am quite sure you are not fit to go alone by train."

She put Violet in a handsome, selecting a fatherly-looking driver. She paid the man and gave him the address, 45, Ascot-road, Brixton, and stood smiling a good-bye to the girl, till the cab bore her out of sight, then her face changed suddenly. A grey shadow almost of fear came over it, and there was a strange hunted look in her wonderful eyes as she muttered to herself—

"What danger! But I think I can escape it. Forewarned is forearmed, and at least I know now what threatens me. But to think that all these years I have never once dreamed of such a contingency, and now I should stumble on it suddenly at a railway station!"

Violet Nairn was borne swiftly homewards. Her headache and fatigue had vanished under

the spell of Mrs. March's pleasant talk, and the dainty little meal. She was only anxious now to get home. She had so much to tell them. First the good news that Mr. Nathan was willing to wait for the money till the 15th of September. Then this wonderful meeting with her mother's old school-fellow.

It was quite an adventure to Violet, who had very little excitement in her life; besides Mrs. March was evidently rich; everything about her proved it—her attire, her manner, her *tout ensemble*, and she had spoken affectionately, tenderly of her old friend, and evidently intended to renew the acquaintance.

Of course such a great lady must have a great deal of influence, and already in fancy Violet saw her father provided with plenty of aristocratic pupils, whose parents would not, like those of his Brixton connexion, beat down the classical tutor's labours to half a crown an hour, with a reduction for quantity.

Mrs. Nairn was sitting at the window, darning a child's sock, and watching for Violet, when the cab drove up; but she never dreamed that it would be stopping at No. 45, and when her daughter alighted was so bewildered that she could hardly make her way to the street door.

"What is the matter, dear, have you had an accident?"

"There's nothing the matter, mother," replied the girl, lightly, "and I got on very well."

They were shut in the little parlour now, and Mrs. Nairn could ask the question on which so much depended.

"Will he wait?"

"Yes, till the 15th of next month; he refused point blank at first, then he relented, but he says if the money does not come by then the law must take its course."

"It must come," said Marjory Nairn, fearlessly. "James never disappointed his brother before, and we were never in so much need as now."

"How is papa?"

"He has just dropped asleep; he worried himself dreadfully about you. He expected you back two hours ago, and when you did not come he got it into his head that something had happened to you, or that Mr. Nathan had refused to wait, and you could not bear to bring back the bad news. Was the man civil? and is Oakley a very dreadful place?"

"Mr. Nathan has a very abrupt manner," said Violet; "but I don't think he meant to be uncivil. Oakley is a strange sort of a place, quite unlike anywhere we have ever been to."

"And why did you come home in a cab?" asked Mrs. Nairn. "I did not think you had money enough to pay for one."

"I hadn't," said Violet, exhibiting three pennies and a crooked sixpence. "That's my only wealth, mother; but I met a friend of yours at London Bridge. I was sitting in the waiting-room to rest for I felt so tired and faint I could hardly stand, when a lady came up and asked if I was ill, then she said suddenly, 'you must be Marjory Nairn's daughter!' and I found out she was an old schoolfellow of yours."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Nairn, with a strange look of dismay, "you must have been imposed upon. I never went to school in my life." Violet started.

"Please don't tell me the lady was an impostor, mother; she was as kind to me as anyone could be; she made me have tea with her, and then she put me into the cab and paid the man; just before she said good-bye she talked of writing to you soon."

Mrs. Nairn looked more and more bewildered.

"Do you mean that she addressed you by name?"

"She said 'you must be Marjory Nairn's daughter,' she told me afterwards I was exactly like you when she knew you, but that you were more of a rose than a lily. She had heard nothing of you since we lived at Brighton; she asked how many children you had, and whether father was prosperous."

"And her name! but of course she did not mention that."

"She did; she said her name was Mrs. March."

now, but when you know her she was Marion Delorme."

"I never in my life had a friend called Delorme," protested Mrs. Nairn. "She must have made a mistake."

"She said you were at school together, only she was older and left first."

"I never went to school," repeated Mrs. Nairn. "I... was an only child, and my parents thought nothing too good for me. In an evil hour my father died, and my mother married again. Her second husband hated me because I stood between him and wealth. I can't tell you by what means he turned my mother's heart against me, but he did it; nothing I did pleased her; she was unkind, even cruel, and at last when I was just eighteen I ran away from home. I have never seen my mother or her husband since. I have kept this from my children because I did not wish them to think lightly of me, but I can trust you, Violet, and I have told you this story of my girlhood because it will explain to you that the woman you saw to-day must be an impostor."

Violet Nairn threw her strong young arms round her mother's neck and kissed her.

"As though your children could think lightly of you, mother darling! Why, we all look up to you almost as an angel. And you were quite right to run away from such a miserable home with papa."

Mrs. Nairn had not said she had left her home with a lover, but she let Violet's statement pass unchallenged.

"Mother," asked the girl, slowly, "who do you think Mrs. March is? What could be her object in speaking to me and telling me a string of falsehoods?"

Mrs. Nairn shook her head.

"I have no idea, Violet. As far as I can see she had nothing to gain by the deception."

"And it cost her something," said Vi, practically, "for she gave me a very substantial tea and paid my cab fare."

"Try and forget the whole affair, Vi," urged her mother. "Where there is deception there is always wrong. Try and put 'Mrs. March' out of your head, and above all, don't say a word to your father, for he would be so uneasy about you he would never let you out of his sight again."

"I will not let father guess my adventure, and I won't speak of it even to you, mother; but I'm afraid I can't forget it. Mrs. March wasn't an ordinary-looking person, you see. She had one of those faces which haunt you."

"You would know her again?"

"I should know her anywhere in the whole world," replied the girl. "It was a wonderful face, mother, as smooth as a girl's, and yet one knew she was not a girl. She moved just like a queen, and she spoke very quietly, and yet one could see she was used to being obeyed. She was tall and slender, her complexion was perfect, and there was not a grey thread in her hair; but I think it was her eyes which struck me most."

"What were they like?" asked Mrs. Nairn, without turning her head.

"They were very large and black, and when she looked at me it was as though fire shot from them, and almost scorched my face. After I had left her, all the way here, I seemed to see those eyes fixed on me."

"I hear your father moving," said Mrs. Nairn suddenly, "run up to him, dear, and tell him about Mr. Nathan; but, remember, not a word of—the other matter."

Left alone Marjory Nairn sank down upon the shabby sofa, her hot tears falling thick and fast.

"Oh, Heaven!" she moaned in her agony, "is there no rest for me upon earth? If I sinned I was driven desperate before I yielded to temptation, and—it was not for myself. I thought all I had suffered these twenty years must have blotted out that one mad act. That woman must have been the one who tempted me. I recognize the description after all these years, for weeks afterwards her eyes haunted me just as they haunt Vi to-night."

"She has tracked me out. Vi gave her our address. What can she possibly want with me. I should have thought her one desire would be

never to see me again. If she betrays me to Percy he will despise me. Oh, when I got up to-day life seemed hard enough; but, Heaven knows, it is ten times harder now. The shadow of my sin of long ago has fallen upon me, and will well-nigh crush me beneath its weight."

CHAPTER III.

THE grounds at Peyton Royal were looking their loveliest one fair September day, and all the *élite* of the neighbourhood (as the local papers phrased it) were assembled there in answer to the cards of invitation intimating that Miss Lester would be "At Home" from four till seven. People were extremely curious to know the young heiress of the Peytons who had only lately returned with her aunt from a long residence abroad, so there was hardly a single refusal, and the garden party was a very brilliant function.

Sir Charles and Lady Peyton (they bore their true titles now) were not present. King's Aston was a great deal too far for their little pony to perform the journey twice in one day, and partly from this cause, partly from the old estrangement between Sir Charles and Miss Lester, they had not called to welcome Dorothy and her aunt home, and so naturally had received no invitation to the present *fête*.

Public opinion was a great deal divided as to the Peytons. Some people thought Sir Douglas quite justified in leaving his daughter to Miss Lester's sole charge, and went so far as to say that considering Sir Charles' son must come in for everything—if anything happened to Dorothy it was perfectly natural there should be no intimacy between the two branches of the family. But another set of folks declared that Sir Charles would have been his niece's rightful guardian, and that the pointed way in which Miss Lester kept the heiress aloof from him and his wife was a regular insult, since it as good as suggested she thought they might have sinister designs on Dorothy, because their son would benefit by her death.

Dorothy Peyton looked a brilliant vision on this fair summer afternoon. She was not beautiful according to the strict rules of beauty, but she was indescribably charming. Gowned in a soft embroidered muslin, fastened at the waist with a broad sash of primrose silk, wearing a large white rustic hat trimmed with ribbons of the same hue, she looked the very picture of an English maiden of high degree. Her clear, colourless complexion, her silky, chestnut hair and dark, velvety-brown eyes made up a vision which everyone present admired.

"She is not like the Peytons," said a local Duchess to Miss Lester, "and she does not resemble her mother. Dorothy seems to have neglected her ancestors and struck out a line for herself, but it is a very charming one."

Janet Lester smiled coldly at the great lady's criticism.

"Now, Sir Charles's boys and girls are all Peytons," resumed her Grace, "you could tell who they were without hearing their names. I suppose now they are living so near you will allow Dorothy to make acquaintance with her cousins?"

"I don't consider fifteen miles particularly near," said Miss Lester, coldly; "and I never approved of the present Lady Peyton."

The Duchess suddenly remembered Janet Lester's old love affair, and felt she had made a mistake by alluding to the family at the Hut; but she was too clever an old lady to make matters worse by an apology; so after one or two more compliments on the result of Miss Lester's training, as manifested by the heiress, she moved away.

Dorothy was walking down a sheltered alley which led from the rose garden down to the old bowling green, her companion a young man; they had met abroad, and to whom, for some inscrutable reason, Miss Lester had taken a great fancy.

Lovel Dolby was seven or eight-and-twenty, a dark, handsome-looking fellow, who always

seemed to be very busy, and who appeared to have a liberal supply of money, but who yet was a mystery to many people, seeing that he had no known profession, trade or calling, and his father, a medical man with a large general practice, had had far too many children to leave his eldest son a fortune.

How Lovel Dolby lived, how he maintained his very comfortable chambers in the Temple, and kept up a really elegant appearance no one could tell.

A young man, who detested him, suggested that he gambled, and enjoyed the devil's own luck.

But this was negatived by an intimate acquaintance, who declared that Dolby disliked cards, and played so seldom that he hardly knew clubs from spades.

Peyton Royal was in Hertfordshire, and though seven miles from a station that goal once gained it was an easy and pleasant journey from London. People thought nothing of running down to lunch and returning the same day. Lovel Dolby, however, was staying in the house, Miss Lester having invited him for a couple of nights.

"How glad you must be to get home," he was saying, in his rich, melodious voice, to Dorothy; "you had been abroad over two years: hadn't you?"

"Over four," she corrected him quietly. "Yes, I was very glad to come to England; but I don't know that I am pleased to settle down at Peyton Royal."

"Why not?" demanded Dolby. "It is one of the loveliest places I have ever seen, and your home. There would be a great fascination to me in living in a place where my ancestors had ruled for centuries. It's quite a different thing to us humble folks who, if we take a house for twenty-one years, at once begin to give ourselves the airs of landed proprietors."

"I—I suppose you are right; but I never care for Peyton Royal. My recollections of it are unhappy ones."

"You mean your father died here? I have heard Sir Douglas was cut off suddenly by an accident."

"Yes; he was only ill two days. I can only just remember him. I loved him very deeply, though I was only five years old; but I knew quite well he did not care for me. In my childish way I understood perfectly he could never forgive me for being a girl."

"It was cruel to let you see his disappointment."

"Oh, it was natural, I suppose. Aunt Janet, too, would have cared a great deal more for me if I had been a boy. You see, Mr. Dolby, no one at Peyton Royal wanted a girl, and I was only an encumbrance."

"I wish you would not talk like that," and his tone took a tender key. "You must know that there are those to whom you are most dear."

Dorothy smiled a little sadly.

"A great many people are pleased to be friendly with the heiress of Peyton Royal, but I don't think they care much about the girl herself. And I was never allowed to make any friends while we were travelling about; if I ever met any girls who seemed likely to become intimate Aunt Janet always moved on the next day."

"You will have to end Miss Lester's guardianship soon, and choose another," said Dolby, meaningly.

But she quite misunderstood his words.

"I can't do that. I shall be of age next June; but my father left me in Aunt Janet's care till I was twenty-five, so you see my emancipation is a long way off."

"I wasn't thinking of another guardian like Miss Lester," returned Lovel, fixing his dark eyes on her face, which grew crimson under his scrutiny; "no one could take such care of you as a husband."

But Dorothy actually laughed.

"The remedy would be worse than the disease, Mr. Dolby. At the very worst Aunt Janet can only keep me in leading strings for something under five years; if I married to escape her authority my bondage would last my life, or, at any rate, till my husband died."

"Why do you speak of marriage like that?"

he demanded; "surely you have not taken up with the new woman craze."

"Not in the least," she said, frankly. "I think if two people love each other marriage may seem very like Paradise to them. But I think if the love were wanting it would be uncommonly like another place."

Dolby watched her closely. She spoke as simply as though they had been discussing the weather. She evidently meant just what she said, and was as yet fancy free and heart-whole. Lovel felt furious at her unconsciousness. He meant to marry the heiress of Peyton Royal, but to do so he must get her promise before any one else attracted her girlish fancy, and how was he to do this when she turned any attempt at love-making almost into ridicule.

"I wish you would be serious," he said, sharply.

"I seem to be unfortunate," returned Dorothy. "Aunt Janet told me this morning I was much too serious, and that I ought to laugh and talk more."

"Oh, hang it all!" cried Lovel, forgetting his manners in his impatience, "you must know what I mean."

"I haven't the faintest idea;" and her manner was so frank and candid he knew she spoke the truth.

"Then I will tell you. I love you with all my heart and soul, Dorothy. I want you for my wife. I know I am not worthy of you. That with my humble position a wealthy heiress might scorn my attachment, but, darling, love can break down barriers, and—"

She interrupted him quickly.

"Any woman who scorned a man's love because she had a little more money than he had would be a disgrace to her sex; but, Mr. Dolby, I am so sorry you have said this."

"Why?" he asked sharply, "can't you give me any hope. I thought you liked me."

"I may like you, but I am quite positive I shall never do anything more."

"What do you mean?"

"A strange light came into her beautiful eyes."

"Love comes suddenly, unsought, unexpected, one doesn't begin by liking a person and liking him a little better every day till one decides the feeling is really love. If I ever care for anyone like that I shall do so all of a sudden."

"Is there anyone else?" demanded Lovel.

"Anyone else? Why, don't you know that abroad I was kept as secluded as any convent maid! You were the only unmarried man I ever spoke to. I don't know why Aunt Janet made you an honourable exception to her rule."

Dolby did know, but he had no mind to enlighten her.

"I will wait so patiently," he pleaded, "if you will only give me a little hope."

"But I can't," said Dorothy, bluntly. "I don't care for you the least in the world like that. Why, if you had told me this afternoon you were engaged to be married I should have been very pleased, and asked Aunt Janet to let us make acquaintance with your bride."

This was plain speaking with a vengeance, but Lovel Dolby persevered.

"I shall never give up hope while you are still Dorothy Peyton."

"Then you will be very foolish," replied Dorothy, "for I have not the least intention of changing my name."

"You won't let this make any difference to our friendship," he said, a little stiffly, "because I have been mad enough to be dissatisfied with half a loaf! You won't rob me of even that!"

"I shall not change," replied the girl, simply.

"I am conscious you have done me a great honour, but it is impossible for me to agree to your wish, and until you give up the idea I think it would be better for us not to meet."

He took her hand and pressed it in an iron grip, which was intolerably painful. Then he raised his hat and turned back in the direction of the rose-garden, and Dorothy Peyton sat down on a rustic bench, thankful for a few minutes' solitude.

"I wish he hadn't spoken," she said to herself; "it will make trouble with Aunt Janet, for she thinks there is no one in the world like Lovel

Dolby, and I suppose he is awfully clever. I wonder why I couldn't care for him. He is very handsome, and sure to make a name for himself; but I never feel thoroughly at ease with him, and I think he could be very hard on anyone who offended him."

If she had seen Lovel Dolby's face as he strolled back towards the tennis courts she would have been confirmed in this opinion. It was dark and lowering, and he frowned so much that his eyebrows almost met.

"You shall pay for this some day, my lady," he muttered under his breath; "when once you are Mrs. Dolby you shall repent of this afternoon's work. After all I can play a waiting game; there is no need to despair when one holds the winning cards."

It was a strange metaphor for a man who particularly disliked games of chance, and never set down to cards if he could help it.

A sudden turn of the walk brought him back to the more public part of the grounds. His face cleared as by magic, and he was soon deep in a conversation with the Rector's daughter, who, as she and her parents had dined at Peyton Royal the night before, seemed quite an old acquaintance.

"A pretty sight, Miss Fortescue," he said, indicating the scene, which the bright autumn flowers, the pretty toilets of the ladies, and the lovely foliage of the trees, just begun to change their tint, made a picture worth remembering.

"Isn't it," she rejoined; "I do think Dorothy Peyton the luckiest girl in the world."

"Because she is an heiress?"

"Because she has everything she can want. A beautiful home, horses, carriages, jewels, and money. Besides, she has no younger sisters treading on her heels, and no schoolboy brothers to worry her life out. No, things are very unevenly distributed in this world, and Dorothy Peyton has more than her share of sugar plums."

Miss Fortescue was twenty-five, the eldest of an impecunious family. There were four girls at the Rectory, all ready to wear a wedding-ring, only no one came around to offer one, which seemed a little hard on them.

"You forget one of Miss Peyton's possessions," said Dolby meaningly, "a very determined aunt. I rather fancy you would not care to exchange Mrs. Fortescue's gentle rule for Miss Lester's."

"Of course I shouldn't," said the girl frankly; "mother's almost a saint, and Miss Lester always makes me feel cold."

"What a peculiar description."

"It's quite true—have you known her long?"

"I met them first abroad eighteen months ago."

"Ah!" it was said so expressively that Dolby looked up inquiringly.

"Has the lady a story?"

"Yes, but a good many people have forgotten it. I heard it from my mother; she was just a little mixed up with it, and Miss Lester has never forgiven her. Don't you notice her manner to mother is a shade colder than to anyone else."

"I don't think an old maid and a happy married woman ever have much in common," he answered.

"Well, I'll tell you the story. Mother came home to the Rectory a bride, and then she had a dreadful illness. She couldn't put her foot to the ground for months. Of course some one had to come and look after her and the pariah. Father suggested a superior maid, but she preferred a lady help; such things were hardly known then, and it was thought a great innovation. Lady Peyton and her sister, who were very intimate with mother in those days, told her it would never succeed; but she advertised, had ever so many answers, and finally selected a Miss Durant. To cut the story short, Charles Peyton, who was engaged to Janet Lester, found out that he preferred the lady help. He eloped with her, and his fiancée never knew of his defection till he wrote and announced his marriage."

"Rather rough on Miss Lester."

"Oh, she had her revenge. She made Sir

Douglas quarrel with his brother and cut off his allowance; the Charles Peytons were as poor as poor could be, and though the brothers were reconciled on Sir Douglas' deathbed, he didn't leave Charles a sixpence. The new baronet was so poor he could not even assume his title, and his wife was plain 'Mrs. Peyton' till she came into a legacy last winter, when he sold out, and they settled down at King's Aston, about sixteen miles from here."

"Why are they not at Peyton Royal to-day?"

"They were not asked. Miss Lester hates them like poison. She will never let Dorothy go near them till she is safely married."

"Who, Dorothy or her aunt?"

"Dorothy. We all thought Miss Lester would find her a husband as soon as she was seventeen, just to cut out Dick Peyton from any chance of being her heir."

Lovel Dolby left Miss Fortescue with some idle compliment. She little knew the service she had done him, or how her careless words had riveted more links in the chain by which he was trying to ensnare the heiress of Peyton Royal.

Poor little Dorothy; with wealth, grandeur, and luxury she was not to be envied. No human creature near her loved her. And in the dark clouds which were gathering round her it would be hard to perceive the silver lining.

(To be continued.)

PAYING THE PENALTY.

—101—

CHAPTER LVI.

LET US now return to Paul Verrill, dear reader, whom we left ill unto death in the hands of his servants.

The doctor who had attended him had been found unconscious in the road, and had been brought back to the house to be cared for in turn himself.

Only the servant who had told the doctor about Philip Walton being there and who had seen him hurrying after him, knew how the terrible wound had been inflicted. But he dared say nothing of all this, fearing that he might be implicated.

The doctor's wound was not so dangerous as was at first supposed, but no word would he say as to how he had received it, choosing to preserve a deep secrecy concerning it.

He had missed Philip Walton—the man had escaped him; but he would commence searching for him just as soon as he was out of danger, for he felt that he was the only person in the world who could throw any light upon the missing young bride.

Paul hovered between life and death for ten days, and during that time the young doctor was constantly at his bedside. In his ravings of delirium it was pitiful to hear him call out for Rachel, praying her, beseeching her, to come to him.

"Why is she not with me?" he asked, repeatedly.

As the dusk gathered about him night after night Paul Verrill would strain his eyes with a longing look towards the door, hoping against hope that she might come to him and lay her little, cool, soft hand on his hot, aching brow, until he should forget his pain.

Even in his delirium the words of the poet haunted him,—

"Oh, heart of mine, we shouldn't

Worry so!

What we've missed of calm we couldn't

Have, you know.

What we've met of stormy pain,

And of sorrow's driving rain,

We can better meet again

If it blow."

It was after the doctor had left him one day that a strange man entered the grand gate and walked slowly up the broad paved walk to the door.

"Is this where Mr. Paul Verrill lives?" he

asked of the servant who answered the summons.

"Yes," returned the man, eyeing the ill-clad visitor angrily. "Servants and tramps are not allowed at the front door. Be off with you!"

"I am neither one nor the other," answered the man, indignantly. "My name's Sam. I'm a respectable cab-driver from Glasgow. I—"

The rest of the sentence was never finished. With a prolonged, decisive laugh the door was shut in his face.

"The impudent thing," cried Sam furiously, pounding against the heavy oaken door with his clenched fist. "I'll break his head in for him, when he opens that door again."

The man had no intention of coming to the door again and encountering the muscular-looking countryman.

Opening an upper window he peered out, and called angrily,—

"Didn't I tell you to get away from there at once?"

"I won't move a step, I tell you, until I've seen Mr. Paul Verrell," cried Sam. "I'll sit right here on this step until he passes out or in; ay, if it takes a week."

"All right; I'll send you out a pillow and a comfortable," declared the servant, with a sneering laugh. "And mayhap you might want an umbrella too. It's going to rain to-morrow or next day, and it's to be hoped you brought your meals with you, for you'll be very hungry if you wait there long enough."

With these words the window was put down with a slam.

"The impudent old jockey!" muttered Sam. Nothing daunted, he gave the bell a furious pull that resounded through every nook and cranny of the house.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes he waited, but there was no answer.

"I think I might get more satisfaction if I went round to the rear of the house," said Sam. "If that fellow comes to the door round there, we'll have a monkey and a parrot kind of a time. Either he'll lick me, or I'll lick him."

A pleasant-faced young maid answered the knock.

"Why, didn't you know," she said pityingly, when she heard what had brought him there, "that Mr. Verrell is very ill—not expected to live, sir?"

"You don't say," said Sam, hoarsely. "No, I didn't know that, miss. I'm a friend of his," he went on. "I should like to see him so much."

"A friend of my master!" said the maid, wondering.

"Yes, I am Sam Brown. No matter how sick he is, I am sure he'd see me if you told him who I am. I want to see him powerful bad," he went on.

Suddenly he bethought himself of a golden key of admittance.

He pressed a ten shillings bill into her hand.

"Will you go to your master, and say that Sam Brown would like to see him?" he asked, earnestly.

"That I will," responded the girl, her respect for him increasing fully a hundred per cent. for this act of generosity.

The girl hesitated an instant.

"I—I am so frightened!" she said, a shadow of perplexity coming over her frank young face.

"Why you don't take me for a dishonest man who has come here single-handed to enter the house and rob it, do you, miss?"

He never forgot how she drew back in embarrassment, looking up at him shyly from beneath her dark curling lashes, and admitted, rather reluctantly,—

"They might turn me from the house, and—and—I have no place else in the world to go for shelter."

Sam Brown made a pretence of looking down the road, which apparently engrossed his attention; but in reality he was listening keenly to what she was saying, and he thought he would use a little more diplomacy with her.

"What's the matter with your getting married?" he asked, suddenly.

"Oh, I have never found one to ask me," she

replied, blushing as red as a rose, and turning away.

"That's no reason you won't meet him some day," he answered bluntly. "But I can't wait outside while you think this subject over. If I can see Mr. Verrell I will return to this side door in half an hour, and pr'aps you'll think better of me."

As he strode down the corridor the girl preceded him, regarding him curiously.

"This is his room," she said, rapping lightly.

To the reply "Come in," she opened the door and motioned him to enter, leaving the two men alone together.

"I don't know as you recognise me, Mr. Verrell," said Sam, earnestly, "but I have seen you a powerful lot of times, and I only came to stay a few minutes to brighten you a bit."

"I—I met you somewhere. I don't know who you are. What—do—you want with me?"

"I am sorry you've been so ill. I would like to help you," Sam returned, slowly, something suspiciously like tears in the honest eyes of the cabman.

"What brought you here?" he asked, "and who are you?"

"Now you are getting at it," responded Sam kindly. "Don't you remember Sam Brown—at Mr. Lee's—back in those other days?"

"Are you that person?" replied Verrell, excitedly.

"That's me, Mr. Verrell. I am here to do you a favour if I can. I would give my life, Mr. Verrell, to help you out of your trouble. Is there any way I can serve you?"

"You are very kind, Sam," said Paul, huskily; "but my sickness is due to a trouble that is worse to me than death."

He read profound pity in the young man's eyes.

"If you would let me make so bold as to talk with you I am sure I could bring you comfort and make your load lighter."

"Thanks for your offer, Sam, but it would be like rooting my heart out to tell you of her—and the end."

He drew nearer him. He could scarcely conceal his deep agitation.

"Please, may I ask you, sir, if your trouble was in any way with poor Miss Rachel, who loved you so?"

A spasm of pain crossed the young husband's features at this sudden mention of his lost wife; but he remembered quite as quickly that Sam, as well as all the rest of the people for miles round her home fairly idolised her.

"I have trusted you before, Sam, I may as well tell you the true state of affairs now that all is over. But before I begin I will say that you must not form any opinion of how I feel. Hope is dead now, and I am quite prostrated with grief. Do not try to comfort me, for I shall never know a second's peace in this world, my boy."

"I am sure there is a lady at the bottom of it," said Sam, bringing the subject round cautiously.

"Yes," said Paul, with a bitter groan, catching his breath convulsively.

"And perhaps I know who the lady is in your case, sir," added Sam, with a triumphant wink.

"Isn't it Miss Rachel, sir?"

It would have taken Sam's breath away if he had known what was coming next.

CHAPTER LVII.

"MISS RACHEL told me all about it, sir."

"Rachel told you about what?" asked Paul, wondering if he had heard aright—if the man had suddenly gone mad.

"About her sorrows, sir," said Sam. "She is grieving her life out because you left her."

"The man is certainly mad," thought Paul. "Either that, or he has been indulging in wine."

"When did you see her last?" inquired Paul.

"Only yesterday, sir," answered Sam. "Oh, Mr. Verrell, may I tell you about all she said?"

Again Paul looked at him, thinking him crazy. Seen Rachel? It could not be!

"Tell me about it!" he exclaimed, hoarsely—"quick!"

Before Sam could comply with his request Paul was taken with such a violent fit of coughing that the servants came hurrying into the room.

"You have caused my master to have another attack," said the maid who admitted him. "The doctor will soon be here and inquire into it, and when he finds I admitted you I shall lose my place. Go quick!"

"Can I see him again?" inquired Sam, eagerly.

"Certainly you can come again, just as soon as he recovers," she answered, promising him anything to get him to go, but determining that he should never set eyes on him again if she could help it.

He grew so alarmingly ill that they thought he would surely die ere the doctor arrived.

Paul Verrell presented an amazing spectacle as he lay upon his couch, his breast heaving with stifled groans, while he was half dazed with excitement, his eyes glittering with a feverish light in their depths.

Every few moments his countenance would change, his eyes glance narrowly at the door, as if expecting someone to enter. A furtive look would fix itself upon his face for a short time, then, with a hungry, longing look, he would turn sadly to the wall.

Yes, Paul Verrell had had a shock, they all declared; and it was a mystery to them what had brought it about so suddenly, when he was on the high road to recovery. Now he was at death's door.

The girl listened to the verdict which they all predicted, trembling from head to foot with concealed emotion, feeling very much like a criminal, and as if she were responsible for his condition.

Every sound that came to her ears startled her. If a footstep from the corridor without passed near the threshold she turned deathly pale with apprehension. It might be that strange country fellow who had returned there again to see him; if so, the end would be fatal, she knew.

Had he left the neighbourhood and gone back whence he had come? she asked herself. Or was he prowling about, intending to conceal himself near by, until the suspicion which he had aroused within her should subside? He would be sure to steal back there again, under cover of darkness, she reasoned in wild alarm.

What should she do to prevent such a catastrophe before it was too late? she wondered.

Oh, if she but dared tell them just how it was! Paul Verrell grew so alarmingly bad that the servants all feared the end would come before the doctor would arrive.

Messengers were sent in a hurry, but he grew worse.

When the doctor arrived he was sinking so rapidly that there seemed to be little hope that he would last through the night.

The doctor did all he could; but it was useless. Paul Verrell's hours seemed numbered.

Dark had fallen. The stars came out one by one in the blue sky. All the lights were turned low at The Willows. The servants crept up through the grand old mansion with noiseless step and bated breath, ever and anon wiping a tear from their eyes, for their young master was well beloved.

As one of the servants stepped to the window to draw the shades he saw a woman hurrying up the walk.

No one must ring the bell; their young master must die in peace.

Like a flash, another thought came to him. Perhaps it might be the young wife who had left the house so mysteriously. The thought lent wings to his feet.

In a moment he was down to the front door and out on the gravelled walk.

"Whom do you wish to see, ma'am?" he asked, anxiously blocking the way and trying hard to peer through the thick veil.

The veiled figure stopped short, drawing her slender figure up to its full height.

"I wish to see your master, Mr. Verrell,"

responded an impatient voice, which was surely not the sweet, gentle voice of his young mistress.

"The man did not remember having seen this young woman before.

"You cannot see him miss," he responded, "My poor master—is—dying. While we are talking he may pass away."

A wild scream broke from the woman's lips. She tried to pass him, crying out—

"I must see him! He must not die until I have told him all! For the love of Heaven do not attempt to bar my way, man! Take me to him! Every moment is precious! Stand aside!"

"You must not attempt to enter the house. If he is not already dead he soon will be. Let his last moments pass in peace."

The strange young woman gripped his arm in a vice-like clutch.

"Don't you hear me say I must see him!" she cried, hoarsely. "Perhaps what I may say to him will save him—will draw his soul back from the mighty river of eternity, whither his soul is balancing for its great flight. Be merciful! See, I am on my knees pleading with you. If you refuse you may be responsible for his death. Do you not understand! Can you not realise what I am telling you!"

The man shook his head.

"I am only obeying orders, ma'am," he answered, stolidly. "No one must enter the house until all is over."

With a wild cry she wrenched herself free from his grasp, and with the fleetness of a storm-driven swallow dashed passed him up the broad flagged walk, across the porch, and through the open door.

The servant looked hard at her, saying to himself that there was something unusually mysterious about the young woman.

There was no way of stopping her, now that she had gained an entrance into the house. He did not know what course to pursue.

Quickly she made her way along the corridors and up the grand stairway, scarcely pausing to take breath until she reached the upper hall.

She had not been in the house before, but she knew that the sick man must be in the front of the house; at least, it was most likely that he would be there.

She heard the sound of a voice, and she bent her steps in its direction, closely followed by the servant.

But she was too fleet for him. Like a whirlwind she dashed down the corridor and into the room which her shrewd intellect told her must be Paul's apartment.

Yes, she was right. There he lay upon the bed. The doctor, who stood over him, was so startled that for a moment he quite lost his self-possession.

Who was this young woman, heavily veiled, who dashed over the threshold?

She did not turn to the right or left, but with a great cry sprang to the bedside.

"Paul, Paul!" she cried. "Do not die—listen to me, for the love of Heaven!"

The doctor dared not make a noise at that critical moment by forcing the intruder away. She had done as much harm as she could—ay, perhaps it might be for the best to disturb him, arouse the young man from the stupor which was fast settling over him, and would in all probability end in death.

"Only look at me, Paul!" she moaned again.

"Speak to me just one word! My poor heart craves it so. Only one word! I am going away in a little while, Paul, dear," she whispered, "and I shall never trouble you any more. I came, oh, so far, to tell you something—to tell you, Paul, dear, what is more precious than life itself to you. Can you listen! Do you know me, I ask!"

With a mighty effort Paul Verrell opened his eyes, slowly, widely, and they were riveted upon her.

Then he closed them again, murmuring faintly—

"You—are—Daphne."

"Thank Heaven, you do recognize me!" she panted. "Hear my words, I pray you, while

there is time. I have come to tell you about Rachel, your wife!"

A groan fell from his lips as she uttered the name, and she went on excitedly—

"I saw her only a short time ago. She is alone, and pining her heart out for love of you. She was always true and loving to you, Paul—not false, as you thought. I misled you in regard to Rachel, for my own purposes. She is as pure as the angels in heaven, and she loves you, and you only. Oh, Paul! can you forgive me for the past, which caused your two hearts such cruel suffering?"

A cry of joy burst from his lips, and the doctor, who watched him closely, saw that a great change had come over him—a change that told him he would live.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE effect of Daphne's words upon Paul Verrell was electrical.

The glad, unexpected news seemed to clear his brain, to make his heart throb a thousand times faster than it was wont, and to make the blood course almost madly through his veins.

He never remembered afterward in what words Daphne told him the startling, wonderful story, in what words she made him understand that he might as well mistrust one of Heaven's white angels as the wife whom he had mourned so long as lost to him.

Rachel had not been false to him! How glad he was to know that. This one thought was sweeter than the breath of heaven to his dry, scorched soul.

He hid perch the miserable idea that had found lodgment for even an instant in his tortured brain.

He would have laid down life itself, and thought it no sacrifice, for her sweet sake just then.

Paul Verrell, white as death, with a mighty effort leaned forward and rested on his elbow. The only words his lips could utter were—

"Rachel, my only love, is she coming to me?"

"Paul, please do not become so agitated. I have much to say to you. Then you will be at liberty to win back your love if you wish," the girl answered, quickly. "Will you hear all?"

Paul nodded faintly. She knew that every word she had to tell him would be like the sharp thrust of a sword through his heart. It seemed like an age to him, until she continued, thoughtfully—

"Do you know, Paul, I believed that she watched us when we had those two interviews about—that separation?"

Paul tried to express his sorrow at this startling information, but it seemed to him as if a hand heavy as death lay on his lips and held them fast.

"Yes, she watched us keenly, with a sharp jealousy that nearly rent her soul in twain with despair. And on that memorable night when we went off together in the carriage with the lawyer you brought, Rachel stood again at the curve of the road, eagerly devouring the scene with wild, impassioned eyes as she said afterward. When we entered the carriage and drove away Rachel took it to heart so terribly that she very nearly lost her reason then and there, and she wandered back to what she called her deserted home, like one in a dream, dead to the world, to friends, and all about her, caring very little whether she lived or died, a wanderer from that moment upon the face of the earth."

A look of pain crossed her listener's face, and his compassion could read the suppressed emotion that was surging wildly in his breast from the troubled expression in Paul's eyes as he fixed his feverish eyes eagerly upon her.

"I—I would have given a dozen lives, if I had them, to have spared my poor, dear wife such cruel suffering," he murmured.

"It is in the past now," she said; then continued—

"Rachel's spirits sunk lower and lower, until her mind seemed very nearly unbalanced. Not

saying a word to any one, she gathered up her few effects, and started away, she knew not whither, travelling without knowing where she was going, until she found herself far away among strangers, her shelter being an asylum, which was afterward burned to the ground. Rachel was one of the fortunate ones who escaped, and soon after she turned her footsteps toward Scotland, where she is now stopping with alacrity as her companion. Never for one moment, by night or by day, has she ceased to think of you, to mourn your flight and absence. Her sorrow is a quiet one now, but it is deep-rooted. No one else has the power to get one word, or even a look from her."

"As for Philip Walton, she cares nothing for him, as every one knows, and he has ceased to hope for the least chance of ever being able to gain her love, knowing that has been given to you, Paul, beyond recall."

"If Rachel could only know the truth," moaned Paul Verrell, covering his face with his hands, "then it might not be too late!"

"She can and will know the truth," cried a voice from the doorway, whom Mr. Verrell recognised as Sam's. "I have come here just this moment, and most happily heard all. With your permission, Mr. Verrell, I will send her a message to Glasgow, to come on at once, and see her husband, who is true to her after all."

Sam did not wait to hear the young husband's glad answer, but started pell-mell down the stairs and out of the house, going in the direction of the nearest telegraph station.

There he wired an important message to Rachel, which explained all briefly, urging her to come quickly to see Paul, her husband, while yet he was alive.

The message was sent without an instant's delay to Glasgow.

When the boy arrived at the door of Mrs. Grant's apartments Rachel was sitting with her head bowed upon her hands.

She had just refused an invitation from Philip Walton to ride with him. His apparent annoyance over her refusal caused her some little wonder.

Why should he be angry? Mrs. Grant had hinted, too, that if she knew when she was well off she would not refuse.

It was no pleasure for her to see Rachel driving with Philip Walton, but she knew full well that if the girl persisted in constantly refusing his invitations there would soon be an end to the fine hotel life she was enjoying. She could not bear to think of that.

It would be like death for her to relinquish all these luxuries now.

As long as she could not get Philip Walton she might as well do all she could to further his cause with the perverse Rachel. Better half a loaf than no bread at all.

Rachel had refused stoutly to accept Philip Walton's attention in any way, and the upshot was she and the widow had had a little unpleasantness.

"Pardon me, but I cannot see how any of my affairs can be of such interest to you as you appear to take in them."

Rachel made up her mind to leave Mrs. Grant's employ at once. She had seen her whispering to Philip Walton in the corridor on two separate occasions.

To Rachel it appeared as if something was not altogether right.

Mrs. Grant heard of her determination to leave her with desperate rage.

"You shall not go!" she panted. "I will not let you!"

"I do not know who is to prevent me!" said Rachel, with hauteur.

"I will!" cried the woman, doggedly.

Rachel grew quite alarmed at this state of affairs, although she did not betray it. She determined that she must get away from this woman, and at once, at any cost.

At the very moment she had made this resolve there was a tap at the door. It sounded very much like one of the maids at the hotel. There must be no scene.

Mrs. Grant opened the door, and peered cautiously out.

"A telegram for Mrs. Verrell," said the boy. Before Mrs. Grant could prevent her from opening it Rachel had sprung forward and tore it quickly open. She had supposed it was from Philip Walton, and she had intended to give full vent to her feelings before the messenger.

One glance at the written words and the whiteness of death overspread her features.

The telegram contained but two lines, which read as follows:—

"Your husband lies dying at The Willows. Come on quick."

She never looked at the signature; she only knew what the horrible message conveyed—her husband lay dying. Someone had searched out and sent for her.

Like a storm-driven swallow, without one word of explanation—ay, without waiting for her cloak—Rachel fairly flew through the open doorway and down the corridor, and ere Mrs. Grant could get her scattered senses together Rachel was out of sight.

"Where are you going, Miss Rachel?" cried one of the servant maids, who met her in the lower corridor.

"I am going to my home. One whom I love is dying. I have not time to catch the train, I fear."

"Not like that!" cried the girl.

But Rachel did not seem to hear or heed. She did not even seem to realise that the girl took off her own hat and cloak and placed them on her. She was just in time to catch the train.

Dying! Paul dying! It seemed to her that the very thought would kill her. Her soul seemed to fly onward in advance of her body.

She petitioned Heaven to take her then, and there, and leave Paul.

As if his life would only be spared; oh! if he would only be spared! The hours dragged their slow lengths by. Town after town were quickly passed.

It seemed to Rachel that the train fairly crept along. Her excitement was so great that it seemed to her she would surely die.

At last the spires of the town loomed into view.

It was early morning. Through the pink glow of the early sunshine she could see the towers of The Willows afar off.

Those about her saw the young girl spring to her feet, throw out her hands with a wild cry, then fall senseless upon the floor.

(To be continued.)

WOMEN'S CONCLUSIONS.—If the conclusions a woman has reached are sound, that is all that concerns us. And that they are very apt to be sound on the practical matter of domestic and secular life, nothing but prejudice or self-conceit can prevent us from acknowledging. The inference, therefore, is unavoidable, that the man who thinks it beneath his dignity to take counsel with an intelligent wife stands in his own light, and betrays that lack of judgment which he tacitly attributes to her.

It is one of the strange inconsistencies of human nature that men prefer to do good through the medium of benevolence rather than through that of justice. It is not uncommon to find the seller exerting every energy to get more than a fair price for his goods, and the buyer putting forth equal efforts to obtain them for less than their true value, and yet both subsequently uniting to found some charitable institution, to uphold a church, to promote a reform, to relieve distress. There are men who will grind the faces of the poor in the morning in their business, and in the afternoon subscribe a good round sum to provide them with food and shelter. There are women, both wealthy and of moderate means, who will drive sharp and hard bargains, and will give only the smallest possible sum to those whom they employ to work for them, yet who will willingly give far more than they thus save when a tale of distress arouses their sympathies and excites their pity. The most extensive schemes of philanthropy cannot atone for a single act of injustice.

HIS DEAREST TREASURE.

—30—

(Continued from page 537.)

"Yes, I should think so. I have no one to be nervous about me. I rather envy you, Peyton. Upon my word I do," and he glanced at Edith, who was sitting near, and derived some pleasure from seeing a deep crimson flush mount up to her cheek and brow, and the graceful head droop.

He was rather puzzled about her. It seemed to him that he had some dim, hazy recollection of a woman bending over him and kissing him the day he shot himself, as he lay in the field, and the woman bore a remarkable likeness to Miss Lister, but then that was ridiculous, simply ridiculous he told himself with a laugh; just as ridiculous as his fancying she was near him always during the first part of his illness.

"She is hardly the sort of woman to do that kind of thing," he reflected. "It must have been a phantom form conjured up by my diseased brain that hovered near me. Besides, she hates me, so I am worse than a fool to waste a thought about it," and with a sigh he would wrench his eyes from her face, and infuse an immense amount of chilly courtesy into his manner when he addressed her.

"I am sure he loves you still," said Marjory one day, when November was drawing to a close, and the two sat together in the library discussing their tea.

"And I am sure he does not!" said her companion, sadly.

"You are wrong."

"I don't think so."

"I can see it in his eyes when he looks at you."

"He never does look at me."

"Not when you are looking at him, of course. But when he thinks you won't see him, he studies you most attentively, as though you were some rare and curious animal."

"Does he really?" asked Miss Lister, a faint blush at her cheek, for she thought he might have some knowledge of the unspoken kiss he had given him in her moment of agony and terror for his life.

"Yes. And you, I hope, are not going to try and persuade me that a man looks frequently at a face he doesn't love."

"No. You are too obstinate to be persuaded."

"Thank you. I know I'm right though. And oh! Edith, I do wish it would all come smooth between you, and that you could be married next spring, the same day as I am."

"Tell me," she went on, after a pause, "if he proposed to you now, would you accept him?"

"What is the use of asking me such a question? He never will ask me to marry him again."

"He may, if you are only commonly polite, and don't freeze him by your coldness."

"No, men don't invite women who have rudely rejected them to do it again. Such things only happen once in a blue moon."

"And the moon is blue," cried Marjory, excitedly. "Come and look at it," and undoing the window she stepped out on the terrace, followed by Edith, who threw a light shawl over her shoulders, ere she stepped out into the chill air.

"You see I am right!" exclaimed Miss Rainham triumphantly.

And sure enough she was. There was the crescent moon shining far above, looking of a pale greenish-blue colour. The sun was just sinking to rest, and the western sky was a mass of fiery orange; the deep clouds which hung beneath were lighted up with opalescent hues, from pink to deep purple, and in the south-west was a broad zone of rose colour; while to the north the clear sky was of a pale greenish blue, and beautifully transparent.

"What a lovely sunset!"

"Isn't it!" agreed Marjory; "but its rather

cold. I'll run in and get a shawl," and away she sped, and Edith found herself alone, watching the gorgeous beauty of the heavens.

By-and-by approaching footsteps warned her of her volatile companion's return, and she said, dreamily, without turning her head,—

"I wonder if you are right, Marjory, after all, and if Noel Penrith still does care for me? I would give anything to know; but I fear it is not so. I tried once to tell him what a mistake I had made, but he stopped me in such a haughty way that I should never dare to speak to him on the subject again. My unfortunate pride would prevent me. If I told him I love him he might take his revenge, and humiliate me, as I deserve."

"What did you say?" she queried, as Marjory mumbled something that was not very intelligible. "That he wouldn't humiliate me if he still loves me (was that what you said!); but you see I am nearly certain that he doesn't, and so, though I long to tell him how very dear he is to me, and ask him to forgive me, I don't do it, and he will never know how wofully I have punished myself. I am very miserable. It is torture to me to be with him daily, to see how good and noble he is, and to realise what I have lost, and so I shall go away and stay with the Aspinalls," she went on after a while, in a low, sad voice.

"Marion can spare me now that Willie has quite recovered, and I fear if I stay that I shall drive him away; my presence must be obnoxious to him, my going will be a relief to him. Don't you think I am right, Marjory?"

"No! most emphatically no!"

Miss Lister started as though she had been shot, and turned tremblingly, for the voice was not Marjory's, and there before her stood Noel Penrith.

"Mr. Penrith!" she murmured, faintly, feeling that she would be thankful if the earth would open and swallow her up.

"Not Mr. Penrith to you," he said tenderly, as he folded her in his arms; "Noel—always Noel for the future. As a rule listeners do not hear much good of themselves, and gain little by their eavesdropping; but I have gained the greatest blessing Heaven could bestow, the knowledge that you love me."

"I—I cannot listen to you," she faltered, and for a moment withdrew herself from his embrace, and stood away—proud, haughty, defiant.

"Not after all I have suffered, and loving me as you do!" he asked, tenderly, stretching out his arms, and the proud face softened, and she was back, leaning against his breast, in an instant.

"But—you—you do not love me now! You have been so cold—so indifferent. I killed your affection, and it can never revive again."

"I do love you," he answered, gravely; "I have never ceased to do so; yet I doubted, till I heard your sweet words just now, that you cared for me. In fact, dearest, I think we have not understood one another; but all is made clear between us now. The clouds have lifted, the mist has rolled away," and stooping he kissed fondly the fair brow of the woman who was destined to be nearer and dearer to him than anyone else in the whole wide world.

[THE END]

A PAIR of Chinese playing cards is a genuine curiosity. They are generally printed in black on thin cardboard, the average width being about that of the finger of a human being. In some cases they are only half an inch broad and about three and a-half inches in length. The length, no matter what the size, is always at least six times that of the width. Some of the packs have queer representations of our "kings," "queens," and "knaves," stamped upon them in black. Others are decorated with the figures of animals, birds, and fishes. Those used by mandarins and high officials bear only figures of mythological creatures.

MOTHER-IN-LAW.

—202—

CHAPTER I.

"Five pounds of grapes!" said old Mrs. Arnold, in astonishment. "Are you quite sure that you understood your mistress's order, Jane! Hot-house grapes are three-and-sixpence a pound, and surely for so small a dinner-party as this—"

"There's no mistake, ma'am," said Jane, perty. Servants will soon learn the spirit of their superiors, and Jane knew that young Mrs. Arnold was not particularly partial to her husband's stepmother. "I took the order myself, and it ain't likely I should be mistook."

"Jane is quite right," said Mrs. Evelyn Arnold, who came in at that moment, a handsome brunette, in a pink cashmere morning-dress, trimmed with band, *à la militaire*, of black velvet—rather a contrast to the neat, cantrick gown which her mother-in-law was accustomed to wear about her morning avocations at home. "And I do wish, mamma, you wouldn't interfere!"

The old lady's serene brow flushed.

"My dear," she remonstrated, "I do not wish to meddle with your concerns; but I really fear that Evelyn's income—"

"Evelyn's income is his own, to spend as he pleases," interrupted the young lady. "And you seem to forget, mamma, that people don't live nowadays as they did when you were a girl."

Mrs. Arnold said nothing more. It was not the first time, nor yet the second, that she had been given to understand by Mrs. Evelyn that her interposition in the household affairs was unwelcome.

The stepson, whom she loved with as fond a devotion as if he had been her own child, had married a beautiful girl, and settled in London.

So far, all was well, although Mrs. Arnold had secretly hoped that he would love sweet Kate Lindsey, the clergyman's daughter of Merrivale, and settle down on the old farm, as his father before him had done.

Yes, if Evelyn was happy she also would rejoice, she assured herself, even although he preferred imperious Marguerite Elerton to Kate Lindsey, and the bustle of the great metropolis to the sweet peace of the vales and glens.

If Evelyn was happy! Yes, there was the question. And sometimes Mrs. Arnold feared that he was not, in spite of his smiles and assumed cheerfulness.

It had been his fondest hope that his step-mother might be one of his household after his marriage. Mrs. Arnold had hoped so, too; but after this, her first visit, she felt that the dream was in vain.

"Oil and water will not mix," she said to herself, with a sigh. "And I belong to a past generation."

As she left the store-closet, where Marguerite and her cook were holding counsel as to a proposed dinner-party, she went slowly and spiritlessly up to the breakfast-room, where Evelyn was reading the morning paper before the fire.

"Evelyn," she said, a little abruptly, "I think I had better go back to the Chestnuts this week."

"Mother," he remonstrated.

"I don't think that Marguerite wants me here."

Evelyn Arnold reddened.

"I hope, mother," he said, "she has not said anything to—"

"It is not natural that she should need my presence," said the old lady, gently. "I might have known it; now I am certain of it. Home is the best place for me. But remember one thing, dear Evelyn. Do not live beyond your income. Marguerite is young and thoughtless. You yourself are inexperienced—"

"Oh, it's all right, mother," said the young man, carelessly. "But I did hope that you could be happy here!"

Mrs. Arnold shook her head.

"I shall see you sometimes," said she. "If

ever you are in trouble Evelyn—you or Marguerite, either—you will know where to come."

So the old lady went away from the pretty bignon of a house in Mayfair, with its bay windows, its *portières* and the boxes of flowers in all the casements.

"Marguerite," said the young husband, as he studied over the list of weekly bills a short time subsequently, "I believe my mother was right. We are overrunning the constable, and we must pull up at once, or we shall find ourselves in the wrong box."

"Fshaw," said Marguerite, who was sewing a frill of point-lace on to the neck of a rose-coloured satin reception-dress; "what has put that ridiculous idea into your head, Evelyn?"

"Facts and figures," answered Evelyn. "Just look here, Madge."

"But I don't want to look," said Madge, impatiently turning her head away, "and I won't—so there! Of course one can't live without money, especially if one goes into society."

Evelyn whistled under his breath.

"But Marguerite," said he, "if a man's income is a hundred a month, and he spends two hundred, how are the accounts to balance at the year's end?"

"I don't know anything about balances and accounts," said Marguerite, with a gay laugh.

"How do you like this dress, Evelyn?" holding up the gleaming folds of the pink satin. "I shall wear it on Thursday evening."

"Do you think, Madge," said the young man, gently, "that it is wise for us to go so much into society and keep so much company on our income?"

"That arrow came from your mother's quiver, Evelyn!" said Madge, with another laugh. "She was always preaching about your 'income.'"

"And, after all," said Evelyn, "what do we care for the fashionable people to whose houses we go, and whom we invite to our parties? They wouldn't one of them regret if we were to go to Jericho to-morrow."

"I would as soon die at once as live without society!" said Marguerite. "Do leave off lecturing me, Evelyn! Society is all that makes life worth living for me."

And, with a deep sigh, Evelyn held his peace.

CHAPTER II.

THAT was a long, lonely winter for Mrs. Arnold, senior, at "The Chestnuts."

Snow set in early; the river froze over, as if it were sheeted with iron, except in the one dismal place down in the ravine, where a restless pool of ink-black water boiled and bubbled at the foot of a perpendicular mass of grey rock, under the shadow of gloomy evergreens.

The sunshine glittered with frozen brightness over the hill, and the old lady was often secretly sad at heart as she sat all alone in the crimson parlour, by the big fireplace, when the logs blazed in the twilight.

And as the New Year passed, and the bitter cold of January took possession of the frozen world, a vague apprehension crept into her heart.

"Something is going to happen," she said. "I am not superstitious, but there are times when the shadow of coming events stretches darkly across the heart. Something is going to happen!"

And one afternoon, as the amber sunset blazed behind the leafless trees, turning the snowy fields to masses of molten pearl, she put on her fur-lined hood and cloak.

"I will go and take a walk," said she. "I shall certainly become a hypochondriac if I sit all the time by the fire and nurse my morbid fancies like this."

She took a long brisk walk, down by the ruins of the old mill through the woods, across the frozen marshes, and then she paused.

"I will come back by the Black Pool," she thought. "It is a wild and picturesque spot in winter, with icicles hanging to the tree-boughs, and weird ice effects over the face of the old grey rock."

It was a dark and gloomy place, funereally shaded by the old elms, which grew there to a huge size; and when Mrs. Arnold got beneath their boughs she started back.

Was it the illusive glimmer of the darkening twilight!—or was it really a man who stood close to the edge of the Black Pool?

"Evelyn! Oh, Evelyn, my son!"

She was barely in time to catch him in her arms and drag him back from the awful death to which he was hurling himself.

When they reached the wainscoted parlour, where the blazing logs cast a ruddy reflection on the red moreen curtains, Mrs. Arnold looked into her stepson's face with loving eyes.

"And now, Evelyn," said she, "tell me all about it. Heaven has been good to you in saving you from a terrible crime."

"Mother, why did you stop me?" he said, recklessly. "I am a ruined man! I shall be dishonoured in the sight of the world! Death would be preferable, a thousand times, to disgrace."

"Evelyn," said the old lady, tenderly, "do you remember when you used to get into boyish scrapes at school? Do you remember how you used to confide your troubles to me? Let us forget all the years that have passed. Let us be child and mother once again."

So he told her all—of the reckless expenditure on Marguerite's part—his own, also, he confessed—which had woven itself like a fatal web about his feet—of the unpaid bills, the clamorous tradesfolk, the threats of public exposure, which had driven him at last to the forgery of his employer's signature, in order to free himself from one or two of the most pressing of these demands.

"And if my investment in the foreign railway bonds had proved a success," he said, eagerly, "I could have taken up every one of the notes before they came due. But there was a change in the market, and now—now the bills will be presented next week and my villainy will be patent to all the world! Oh, mother, mother! why did you not let me fling myself into the Black Pool!"

"Evelyn," said his stepmother, "what is the amount of these—these forged bills?"

"Two thousand pounds!" he answered, staring, gloomily into the fire.

"Exactly the amount in the Three per Cents. your father left me," said Mrs. Arnold. "They would have been yours at my death. They are yours now, Evelyn!"

"Mother, you don't mean—"

"Take them," said Mrs. Arnold, tenderly pressing her lips to his forehead. "Go to town the first thing to-morrow morning and wipe this stain from your life as you would wipe a few blurred figures from a slate. And then begin the battle of life anew."

And up in the little room which he had occupied as a child Evelyn Arnold slept the first peaceful slumbers which had descended upon his weary eyelids for many and many a night.

In the midnight train from town came Marguerite to The Chestnuts, with a pale, terrified face and haggard eyes.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she sobbed; "where is he—my husband! He has left me, and the letter on the dressing-table declared that he would never return alive! Oh, mother, it is my fault! I have ruined him! Help me, comfort me; tell me what I shall do!"

Mrs. Arnold took her daughter-in-law's hand, and led her softly to the little room where her husband lay sweetly sleeping.

Marguerite drew a long, sobbing sigh of relief, and clasped her hands together as if in mute prayer at the sight.

"Hush!" said the old lady; "do not wake him. He is worn out, both in mind and body. Only be thankful that Heaven has given him back to you, almost from the grave."

And as the two women sat together by the blazing logs in the crimson parlour Mrs. Arnold told Marguerite the whole story of the meeting at the Black Pool.

"Mother," said Marguerite, with a quivering lip, "it is my doing. You warned me of this long ago. Oh, why did I give no heed to your words? I deserve it all."

"You will do better for the future, my dear," said the old lady, kindly. "Only be brave and steadfast."

So the young people went back to town and commenced the world anew, withdrawing from the melström of "society," and living within themselves.

Mrs. Arnold, senior, came with them, and Madge, as everyone calls her now, is learning the art of housekeeping under her direction.

"Mamma is an angel!" says the young wife, enthusiastically. "And if I could only be just like her I should have no higher ambition."

DON'T SHIRK RESPONSIBILITY.—There is a certain easy, good-natured indolence, that takes things as they come and submits to almost any inconvenience rather than make a fuss which is much praised and fostered. It has its good points. To fret and fume over little troubles, to worry one's self, and every one around, to no purpose, about what cannot be helped, is silly in the extreme. But, when wrong things can and ought to be helped, when the selfishness and carelessness of a few persons seriously interferes with the comfort of many, or when in any way the best interests of the community demanded an alteration, then patient silence and good-natured passivity are at a discount. Not by fretting and fuming, but by wisely taking such steps as the circumstances call for may the real principle of freedom be upheld. To "mind one's own business, and let other people's alone" is excellent doctrine, only we must be very sure that we include in the former clause all that really belongs to it, and not make it a pretext for shirking any responsibility that falls to our share.

FAMILY TIES.—The majority of young girls marry a man with a vague idea that they are going to endure no interference from his family. From the first they are on the aggressive. They positively hate the idea of a mother-in-law, and make up their minds beforehand that they won't stand any bossing, before they have tried to find out whether that mother-in-law is a nice person or not. Did it ever occur to such that your own mother, whom you dearly love, and whom you think so kind and good, is really a disagreeable mother-in-law to your brother's wife? You get indignant at the proposition, but whenever you think of his mother as a person to be disliked, just think of your own sweet silver-haired mother at home and wonder to yourself how anyone could hate her. Married life has its duties as well as its privileges, and one of the chief duties is to be able to get along pleasantly with your husband's family, so that instead of really loving their son they are in reality gaining a daughter. Perhaps it is not always easy to do, as no doubt in some cases the new relatives do not look with favour upon you, and do everything in their power to make life unbearable. Even in that case do what you can to conciliate them, and if you fail you have done what you could. Such cases are extremely rare, however, and you often hear Mrs. So-and-So speaking with pride of the beauty, ability, or some other good quality of her daughter-in-law. Of course the husband ought to return the compliment; and if he sees you taking the initiative he will follow most cheerfully in the ways your feet are treading. It is such a delightful thing for all the families on both sides to be on pleasant terms, and so much better for the young couple. There have been some wives, who, by coldness or in some other manner, have completely estranged their husband from their families; and although their better halves have made no visible protest, still, if one could search their innermost thoughts, they would wish that it were different. So, young wives, do not try to separate your husband from his mother, but join in with him in showing her respect and affection, and you will find that it will come back to you a hundredfold from his folks and from him; and you will live a happier and more peaceful life in consequence.

FACETIE.

"I HOPE you have had a pleasant time," said he, after the ball. "Oh, delightful! I'm completely exhausted," said she.

MICK: "Why do thim false eyes be made of glass, now?" Pat: "Shure, an't how else could they say throo' 'em, ye thickhead."

HE (eagerly): "What would you say if I kissed you?" SHE (demurely): "Why, I don't know. I always think that the best speech is extempore."

MRS. SWEET: "Do you find it economical to do your own cooking?" Mrs. Burnam: "Oh, yes; my husband doesn't eat half as much as when we had a cook."

TEACHER: "What are you laughing at? Not at me?" Pupil: "Oh, no, sir." Teacher: "Then what else is there in the room to laugh at?"

MRS. B.: "Have you any near relatives, Norah?" Norah: "Only an aunt, mum; an' she isn't what you might call near, for it's in the north of Ireland she lives, mum."

"MR. HARDUP must have used a great deal of flattery to win the heiress." "No; he simply told her the truth." "Indeed!" "Yes; he said that he couldn't live without her."

"BROWNE is a most considerate fellow." "Why do you think so?" "He can play the fiddle." "Can he? I never heard him." "That's just it; nobody else ever did!"

MRS. MELLOWDY (singing): "Sleep, baby, sleep!" Mr. Mellowdy: "Laura, I wish you'd close that piano and stop singing. You've been keeping this child awake for over an hour."

"WHEN does a man become a seamstress?" "When he hems and haws." "No." "When he threads his way." "No." "Give it up." "Never, if he can help it."

"AN' that's the pillar of Hercules!" she said, adjusting her silver spectacles. "Gracious, what's the rest of the bedclothes like, I wonder?"

"No, sir, my daughter can never be yours." "I don't want her to be my daughter!" broke in the young ardent; "I want her to be my wife."

LITTLE George was questioned the other day about his big sister's beau. "How old is he?" "I don't know." "Well, is he young?" "I think so, for he hasn't any hair on his head."

MISS BEACON HILL: "Dear me! Strange, but I cannot remember. Where is Dresden?" Young Lakeside: "Oh, that's easy. In China. Saw the address in a shop-window to-day."

A LITTLE girl hearing her mother observe to another lady that she was going into half-mourning inquired whether any of her relations were half dead.

A CERTAIN clever authoress was once asked by a writer of the opposite sex who is not remarkable for civility: "Wouldn't you like to be a man?" To this the lady readily replied: "Wouldn't you?"

"How much do you want for that chicken?" "Four shillings for the two." "But I only want one." "I can't help that; them two fowls have been together this last fifteen years, and I ain't a-going to separate them now."

"WHAT's the matter with you? What are you spluttering about?" asked Synnex. "Doggles called me a fool," answered Chumpleigh. "Oh, I wouldn't mind that; he never did have any tact."

GOSLIN: "I think I'll take a wife, doucher-know, Miss Flypp." Miss Flypp: "If you want to get married, that will be your proper plan. I don't suppose that any woman would ever take you."

MR. MICAWBER: "I admire the helpful spirit the Wilberforce boys display. They are always doing what they can for each other." Mr. Quilp: "What have they done lately?" Mr. Micawber: "John has become a dentist, while James has established a sweetstuff factory."

"WHAT station do you call this?" asked a man as he crawled out of the ruins of a carriage after a recent railway accident. "Devastation, sir," replied his fellow-passengers, in chorus.

NEPHEW (trying to make a good impression): "Uncle, this port is excellent." Uncle: "Well, I should think so; it's fifty years old." Nephew: "By Jove, you don't say so! What a superb wine it must have been once."

"I HEAR Mr. Griffin has the pneumonia," said Mrs. Budd, who was calling on Mrs. Potts. "Well, I don't believe it," retorted Mrs. Potts. "He's too mean. If he has any monia at all it's an old or second-hand one."

LITTLE Arthur has been to church. "How did you like the sermon?" asked his sister. "Pretty well," responded the youthful critic. "The beginning was very good and so was the end, but it had too much middle."

BETWEEN BOHEMIANS.—"Will it give you pleasure to breakfast with me?" "Certainly." "Well, put an extra plate on your table, and in a quarter-of-an-hour I will be at your room!"

"YOUR father is worth at least half a million, is he not?" said he to his jealous sweetheart. "That is true," she murmured. "And yet you doubt my love," he replied, in an injured tone.

"I REMEMBER you very well," said the hotel keeper, "but your wife has grown very thin." "Yes." "She was taller." "Yes." "And lighter complexioned, was she not?" "Yes. Besides, you know, it is not the same wife."

CHAFFIN: "I'm really deuced anxious to know what the new woman is going to do this leap year!" Miss Cutting: "Don't worry. They won't be likely to trouble any one but the men."

"THE trouble with this tooth," said the dentist, probing it with a long, slender instrument, "is that the nerve is dying." "It seems to me, doctor," groaned the victim, "you ought to treat the dying with a little more respect."

A GENTLEMAN one day took his little lad out for a walk, but the boy, from some cause or other, got lost, and, meeting a policeman, tearfully asked,— "Please, sir, have you seen a man with a little boy? 'Cause if you have, I've that little boy!"

MOTHER (sternly): "Why did you tell that lie to the teacher?" Johnny: "To save some boy from punishment." Mother (mollified): "I knew there must be some extenuating circumstances. Who was it you wished to save from punishment?" Johnny: "Myself, mother."

SCRUPULOUS VALET (on finding a five-franc piece in the pocket of his master's new waistcoat): "It's a thousand pities for the waistcoat, but there's nothing else for it. I must make a hole large enough for the money to slip through!"

"ANYHOW," said a young lady, who had just returned from a woods picnic, "Eve may have been frightened at a snake in the Garden of Eden, but she never had a nasty, hairy caterpillar crawl down the neck of her dress." And we don't suppose she ever had.

MARY (triumphantly): "I heard last night that Jack was head over heels in love with me." Amy (jealously): "You cannot believe all you hear." Mary: "No; but I should not wonder if there was something in it." Amy: "Why? Who told you?" Mary: "He did."

CAPTAIN of the Muddleston volunteer fire brigade to old Buggins, who has arrived late, just as the fire is got under: "Why the dickens can't you get here in time, eh?" Buggins: "Well, it's not my fault. I live a long distance from the fire." Captain: "That's no excuse. You must move nearer, that's all."

MRS. AGASSIS found, one morning, in one of her slippers a cold, little, slimy snake, one of six sent the day before to her scientific spouse, and carefully set aside by him for safety under the bed. She screamed, "There is a snake in my slipper!" The servant leaped from his couch, crying, "A snake! Good Heaven! where are the other five?"

"Oh, will he bite?" exclaimed one of Middleton's sweetest girls, with a look of alarm, when she saw one of the dancing bears in the street the other day. "No," said her escort, "he cannot bite—he is muzzled; but he can hug." "Oh," she said, with a distracting smile, "I don't mind that."

"You used to say you thought heaven sent me to you," she said, tearfully, after a little family jar. "I see no reason to change my mind about that now," he returned. "Really?" she exclaimed, delightedly. "Certainly," he replied. Then he spoiled it all by adding, "As a punishment."

TEACHER: "Johnny, can you define for us the difference between 'caution' and 'cowardice'?" Johnny: "Yes, miss; when you're afraid to go out in a boat, an' stay at home for fear it'll sink, an' the boat comes in all right, it's cowardice." Teacher: "Well?" Johnny: "And if you're afraid, an' stay at home, an' the boat does sink, then it's caution."

COUNTRY MAID-SERVANT: "Gae me a third-class return ticket." Booking-clerk: "Where to, please?" Country maid-servant: "Never you mind that; gae me my ticket." Booking-clerk: "But you must say where you're going." Country maid-servant: "I want none o' yer impudence; you're nae business whar I'm gaun." Booking-clerk gives in, and quietly books her to the nearest terminus.

TEMMINS: "You remember that little book I wrote called 'How to Become Beautiful'?" I thought it would go well, but only two copies have been sold in eight months." Simmons: "That's because you don't understand business. Call them in from the booksellers, and change the title to 'How to Become More Beautiful,' and the women will make a regular bargain-counter rush for them."

A GENTLEMAN called his errand-boy one day, and said: "I want you to take this parcel to B—. You will have to hurry up as you have only half an hour to catch the train. You won't be back till late, so here is sixpence for your dinner and sixpence for the train fare." About an hour after the master was surprised to see the boy return. "Why, what's the matter?" he asked. "Please, sir, I forgot which sixpence was for my dinner and which one for the fare."

"How do you manage to wake up so early every morning?" inquired Boggs of his friend Biggs, who goes to work at six. "Alarm clock," replied Biggs. "I have one too; but I never hear it go off." "I never hear mine either," declared Boggs. "Then how in the world do you wake up?" "My wife wakes me up every morning, saying: 'For goodness' sake, get up and stop the alarm on that clock! It will arouse the neighborhood.' By the time I am awake it has stopped."

A LADY resident in the west end of Glasgow, having one night discovered one of her maids in the act of receiving a parting kiss from her "lad" in front of the house, took the first opportunity of admonishing the delinquent on what she termed the "impropriety" of kissing so openly. "I should," she remarked, "never have expected such a thing, Mary." "Deed, mem," responded Mary, "to tell the truth, I never expected it myself, for he's been coortin' me for two years, and never kissed me afore, an' he wadna hae daen it the night only that he'd had a wee drap."

The proprietors of the *Scotsman* had once to pay damages because their editor, in a leading article, called some local celebrity a "serpent." As the calling of "bad" names is illegal in Scotland, Russell had practically no defence. Yet he made a fight, and on being worried, he went straight back to his office to attack the triumphant "serpent." On his arrival, by a singular accident, he found on his table a pamphlet which the "serpent" had just issued. This pamphlet, then, he proceeded to make the subject of a leading article; and in it he presently noticed certain statistics which somehow were all wrong in their additions. So he quoted the statistics, pointed out their blunders, and then wrote: "Thus, if Mr. — is not a serpent, he yet seems to be a particularly bad adder."

SOCIETY.

PRINCESS CHRISTIAN and Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein have accompanied the Queen to Cinizel, and will afterwards go with Her Majesty to Coburg to the Royal wedding.

THE Queen has for many years possessed a private telegraph wire from the Castle to the post-office at Windsor, the wire being in charge of Her Majesty's telegraph clerk, who accompanies the Court everywhere. There are private wires from both Balmoral and Osborne; and at Cinizel there is a telegraph office fitted up in the hotel, with a wire to the Nice post-office.

THE Duke and Duchess of York are to arrive at Knowley for their stay with Lord and Lady Derby on Monday, the 23rd inst., and their visit to Lancaster is to take place the next day. It is expected that the Duke and Duchess of York will be present at Liverpool Races on the Grand National Day, Friday, the 27th. There is to be a large house party at Knowley for the races.

THE Prince of Wales has excused himself from going to Moscow in May for the Imperial Coronation, and the Queen is to be represented by the Duke of Connaught, who is to be conveyed from Sheerness to Wiborg in the *Osborne*. It is probable that the Princesses of Wales and her daughters will then go to Russia for three weeks, as they have been earnestly asked to do so by the Dowager Empress, and the Emperor and Empress.

THE King and Queen of Denmark will not attend the coronation of the Czar at Whitau-tide, but will be represented by the Crown Prince and Crown Princess, who will probably be accompanied to Moscow by their sons, Prince Christian and Prince Charles. There is to be a great gathering of the Royal Family at Copenhagen at Easter, including the Dowager Empress of Russia, the Princess of Wales, and the Princesses Victoria and Maud, and the Duchess of Cumberland. It is probable that the marriage of Princess Louise, eldest daughter of the Crown Prince, and Prince Frederick of Schaumburg-Lippe will take place on Wednesday, April 15th. The King of Denmark intends to go to Wiesbaden early in May for his usual course of the waters, after which he will pay a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland at Gmunden.

THE Duke of Fife's new house on Deeside, which is to replace New Mar Lodge, will be built of pink granite, and the roof is to be covered with red tiles. It will cost £20,000, and will be a low building, with gables and turrets, and the effect will be very picturesque. There is to be a large central block, with two side wings, which will project forward in the form of a crescent. The main front will be a hundred and eighteen feet in length, and the wings will have a hundred and fifty-six feet of frontage besides. The house is to be surrounded by a verandah of rustic woodwork eight feet in width. The kitchen and offices are to be entirely separated from the main building, and extensive new stables are to be erected. There will be several large sitting-rooms on the ground-floor, with suites of apartments for the Duke and Duchess of Fife and for the Prince and Princess of Wales on the upper floor. The whole house is to be lighted by electricity.

It is very certain that the Tsarina will not neglect the occasion of the Coronation to prove her deep and lasting affection for the home of her girlhood. Her Imperial Majesty has constantly shown how dear Darmstadt is to her, and that none of her old friends and pensioners have been forgotten since her marriage. Quite recently she despatched a donation of five hundred roubles to the Princess Alice Hospital, accompanied by a further gift of a number of handsomely embroidered bodice-caps, the quaint designs of many of which, added to their beauty, are sure to afford ceaseless delight to the invalids they will cover. In addition, none of the institutions formerly patronised by the Tsarina have been allowed to suffer by her absence, and the Grand Duke has amply fulfilled the promise made to his beloved sister that he would take her place as far as possible with her particular protégés.

STATISTICS.

THERE are over 2,000 first-class race-horses in this country.

FEBRUARY is the month in which the greatest number of births occur; June the month in which occur the fewest.

A MATHEMATICIAN has discovered that a bicyclist can travel fifteen miles over a good road on his wheel with less exertion than he can walk three miles.

BEFORE the English occupation of India it was estimated that the Ganges carried to the sea every year 1,000,000 dead bodies. It was then considered by the Hindoos that the happiest death was one found in its waves; and all pious Hindoos who could do so were carried to its banks and placed in its waters to die.

THERE are under the ocean, spreading to almost every civilised part of the world, no fewer than 1,167 submarine telegraph cables, having a total length of 143,790 nautical miles, and representing a capital of nearly £40,000,000. To keep these cables in repair requires the exclusive service of thirty-seven specially constructed and equipped telegraph steamers. Nearly all these cables have been manufactured at factories on the banks of the Thames.

GEMS.

THE great secret of success in life is for a man to be ready when his opportunity comes.

JUST laws are no restraint upon the freedom of the good, for a good man desires nothing which a just law will interfere with.

WE can never replace a friend. When a man is fortunate enough to have several, he finds that they are all different; no one has a double in friendship.

LEARN from the earliest days to insure your principles against the perils of ridicule; you can no more exercise your reason if you live in the constant dread of laughter than you can enjoy your life if you are in constant dread of death.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CREAM SUGAR GINGERBREAD.—One cup sour cream, beaten, one cup sugar, one beaten egg, salt, one tablespoonful ginger, one teaspoonful soda, two cups sifted flour; beat all well together, bake in loaf.

A DELICIOUS PUDDING.—One half pint of claret, half a pint of raspberry syrup, three quarters of a pint of sherry, half a pound of white sugar, one ounce of isinglass soaked in the sherry, one lemon juice and rind. Put on the fire and allow to come to the boil; strain into a mould. Serve with a rich custard, flavoured with vanilla.

CUP COBBLERS.—Three pints of milk, eight eggs, the whites of two taken out; boil the milk with a stick of cinnamon and let it cool, then add six tablespoonfuls of sugar, and stir in the beaten eggs. Fill the cups and place them in a deep pan. Place in the oven, and fill the pan nearly two-thirds of the depth of the cups with boiling water from the teakettle. Bake in a quick oven. Try them with the handle of a silver spoon.

ORANGE CHIPS.—Remove the peel in thin chips, and for every pound of the peel weigh out a pound of sugar. Squeeze all through a fine sieve; put the sugar with the juice and let it stand over night, soaking the peel in water for the same length of time. The next day boil the peel in the same water until very tender, drain and put it with the sugar and juice, and boil until the sugar candies. Lift the chips from the syrup one by one, and lay on greased papers to dry, which process sometimes takes several weeks.



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Used all over the Civilized World.

MISCELLANEOUS.

By order of the German Government's banking officials, experiments have been made with a safe composed of steel wires and cement. It had been debated whether practical fire-proof vaults could be constructed of this material, and the tests were made to settle this point with the following result: A safe was placed upon a pyre of bags and drenched with kerosene, which, after being set on fire, kept the safe for half-an-hour exposed to a heat of eighteen hundred degrees Fahrenheit—that is, a heat in which iron will melt. Two hours after, the safe was opened and the contents, silk, paper, draft blanks, and a maximum thermometer, were found to be absolutely uninjured, and the maximum thermometer showed that within the safe the temperature at no time during the test rose above eighty-five degrees.

LABRADOR is not considered a desirable place in which to live, yet the people who live there seem to enjoy it. One of the advantages is that they do not have to pay rent. Most of the people own a summer house and a winter house. The summer house is on the coast. The people live in these houses from June to October. The good fishing season is during these months, and this is the principal industry of the people. They catch, dry, and sell the fish to traders, and thus purchase their winter supplies. The winter houses are on the shore of an island, lake or river, and built in the shelter of trees. In the winter the men hunt for rabbits, partridges and other small game, and trap the fur-bearing animals. Wood-cutting is also an industry, but does not bring money. The wood is for their own use. Part of the time the weather is so severe that there is no possibility for work or fun out of doors. Winter is the time of visiting. The dogs are harnessed, and the whole family cross the lake or river for a visit. Dancing is the evening amusement. The people of Labrador are a kindly, home-loving people.

To be able to make walls that will entirely resist moisture is of great importance in localities where the earth is damp and sudden. Experiments have been made with brick and sandstone, saturated with oils of various kinds. It is proven that raw and boiled linseed oil are the best substances with which to treat such wall materials. If bricks are heated as hot as they can be handled with bare hands, then dropped into oil and allowed to remain there until cold, then placed where they will drain and laid in a wall with good Portland cement mortar, they are practically impervious to water. Of course, a great deal of expense attends this work, but there are places where nothing else seems to answer as well. For ordinary cellars and walls, where such extreme nicety of handling is not required, a thick coating of Portland cement mortar laid on very smoothly and washed over with several very thin coats of almost all Portland, will secure the utmost dryness and cleanliness. The qualities of Portland cement are not fully appreciated by the average householder.

PURE oxygen in tanks now forms a regular part of the equipment of some modern hospitals. It is only of recent years that the wonderful value of the health-giving gas in emergency cases has been thoroughly demonstrated. Oxygen, in copper or galvanized iron reservoirs, holding five hundred or one thousand gallons, is now furnished by all medical-supply dealers, and it is a common thing for a hospital surgeon to go to the telephone, ring up a dealer, and order a tankful of the resuscitating gas. Its prompt use in cases of coal gas asphyxiation is invaluable. Thousands of lives are saved annually by the prompt use of this remedy. In former years the usual treatment for asphyxiation was that given to revive a nearly drowned patient—inducing respiration by manipulating the arms and forcing air in and out of the lungs. It was a slow method to revive a man suffering from the deadly effects of gas, and chances were usually about one in ten for recovery. Now, where the oxygen-pumping method is used with reasonable promptness, death rarely results.

PARIS's fantastic fashion has now developed itself in the direction of lamp shades. They are made like ball-dresses, of lace and ribbons, with trails of flowers.

HOUSE-CHESTNUTS are generally supposed to be unwholesome, yet in Turkey they are roasted for coffee, fermented for liquor, and used for horse medicine.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

RETRA.—Consult your druggist.
F. B.—Get a book on the subject.
H. O.—Addresses are never given.
AMSTERDAM.—It will probably reach him, all the same.
D. M.—Venezuela occupies the north-east portion of South America.
QUEENSLAND.—The case is too long and intricate to be dealt with here.

INTERMEDIATE.—Robert Louis Stevenson died in December, 1894.

AGRIC.—You had better send them to the dyer's if you want it properly done.

P. T.—Place the affair and all documents connected with it before counsel.

HOOGEWATER.—Powdered brickdust and sweet oil, then dry with plain brickdust.

NORAL.—Wash with camphor and borax hair wash obtainable from a chemist.

IN WANT OF ADVICE.—The remedy might injure the colour; show it to a professional cleaner.

J. B.—It all depends upon what sort of paper it is; it must be cleaned before anything is done.

A. G.—There is little to be said in favour of the cigarette, and much to be said against it.

KIRBY.—Soda is an excellent material for cleaning tinware. Apply damp with a cloth then rub dry.

OLD READER.—Send samples of your work appropriate to their pages to the art editors of the magazines.

LETTY.—A tablespoonful of tomato ketchup or any kind of prepared sauce is excellent for flavouring stew.

INDIGNANT.—You had better comply with the order of the Court, or the consequences may be highly disagreeable.

E. O.—The first step is to get an M.P. to nominate you to Home Secretary, who puts you on list of candidates.

R. N.—For the golden wedding the invitations should be printed in gold, and the presents be of the same metal.

A QUESTIONER.—A man and wife should have time to become acquainted with the dispositions of each other before marriage.

G. J.—Have the tops shaved off with a sharp razor and brush them daily with acetic acid; they will break up and disappear.

L. S.—The "recipe" for manufacturing aerated water is a machine with which manufacturers furnish full working instructions.

CONSTANT READER.—A Lieutenant in a British line regiment gets £6. 6d. daily, and a second lieutenant £5. 5d., that is lowest.

SWEET SEVENTEEN.—The attentions of a ball-room, unless followed up, are to be taken as nothing more than ordinary politenesses of society.

AMBITION.—The best and only manner that we know of for getting a dramatic piece produced on the boards is by sending it to some manager.

ADA.—To beat the whites of eggs quickly put in a pinch of salt. The cooler the eggs the quicker they will froth. Salt cools and freshens them.

MARK.—The eating of blood is forbidden in the Old Testament. Therefore the Jews eat only the meat of animals killed by being bled to death.

PUL.—Sunken eyes come from a variety of causes. Too much mental work or too little sleep may produce this effect. Smoking cigarettes is often the cause.

ROOPE.—In event of war the Volunteers may be mobilised for the defence of the country only; they cannot be sent out to other countries, nor even to the colonies.

MARIE.—The probability is your bird is suffering from what is called alopecia or French moult, due probably to debility, and if so a more generous diet is all that is required.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—Knighthood is conferred by the Queen by simple verbal declaration, attended by a slight form, but requiring no patent or other written instrument.

T. G.—The scars may modify in time, but it is impossible to remove them except the skin were taken away and skin from another part of your person laid over the place.

CORNELIA.—The possessor of trained nurse, while it has hardships, is an honourable one, and is well paid, and for those who are capable there is almost always steady and congenial work.

LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—Torpedoes have had several inventors, the one in use in the British navy being the Whitehead; torpedo boats are of different classes, from six feet long up to about the size of our river steamers.

L. M.—Quite impossible to assign a value to the things you possess; all depends upon the whim of curiosity hunters; perhaps, if you advertise them, you might get satisfactory offers, or you could send them to an auctioneer and put a reserve price upon them.

TABRIS.—In simple cases very mild soap and water, very soft rubber, and when clean and dry lightly rub over with olive oil; but this recipe might not answer in all cases.

V. B.—Give them plenty of fresh water every day. Never allow them to go thirsty. Have the pans containing the water easy of access, and keep them in the same places all the time.

A. R.—If you write to Agent-General for Victoria, Victoria-street, London, S.W., sending stamped envelope for answer, he will tell you the fee to send and the official it should be sent to in Melbourne.

GERALD.—A practiced diver can work from four to seven hours daily below the bottom of a vessel, and can clean from seven to fifteen square yards per hour, according to the condition of the bottom.

TRACER.—We really cannot think of suggesting a remedy in a case which has puzzled all doctors, but you are quite safe in bathing the limb with water containing some carbonate of soda, that at least will allay the irritation.

MARCUS.—The Greeks and Romans had no weeks until they borrowed the division of time from the East. The Greeks divided the month into three equal periods: the Romans into three very unequal—the Kalends, Ides, and Nones.

C. G.—We are sure from the tone of your letter that whatever you have read has been of an elevating character, and this being so, we do not see why you should not continue to while away your leisure hours in the way you like best.

HENRY.—Let your seedlings alone, keep even water away from them just now, in all probability they will die down under the frost, but in spring they will appear again, and then they should have special attention, getting water freely at intervals.

PLENTY OF TIME.

"PLENTY OF TIME!" oh! careless sentence
 That leads so often to repentance!
 What if the bell said to the chime
 There is plenty of time, plenty of time?
 Alas, for the musical rhythm,
 Alas, for the rhyme!

"Plenty of time" for needless labour;
 A great mistake, my loving neighbour.
 What if the star said to the light,
 There is plenty of time, why shine so bright?
 Alas, for the march of the planets!
 Alas, for the night!

"Plenty of time" to do our sowing,
 Why plant so soon for the summer growing?
 What if the cloud said to the grain,
 There is plenty of time, I'll shed no rain!
 Alas, for the bountiful harvests!
 Alas, for our gain!

"Plenty of time!" oh! to what sorrow
 Leads this putting off till to-morrow.
 What if the heavens said to the earth,
 There is plenty of time! cease life, cease birth!
 Alas, for the terrible chase!
 Alas, for the death!

M. A. K.

INQUIRER.—The course of study is most comprehensive, embracing nearly all of the branches taught in the colleges, except those bearing strictly on professional subjects. Only a moderate number of applicants are able to pass examination.

A. K.—Take note of the things you most enjoy and are the most deeply interested in, and soon you may discover how your tastes run. If you find yourself with a real enthusiasm for any particular branch take it up and make yourself an expert in it.

ARNOLD.—Various dealers issue what they call catalogues, but they rarely contain any satisfactory information about the prices of coins. They give a few lists of articles for sale, all rather vague and indefinite, and some descriptions of stamps, books and the like.

SLEEPLESS ONE.—It may be, in your case, that you allow yourself to drink too much tea, which is often the cause of sleeplessness. If so, limit yourself to one cup, made weak by milk. Coffee is also noted for keeping most persons awake. In the morning is the better time to drink it.

UNOBTENTIVATED.—Be your own self in matters which pertain to individual bearing in social circles. Never be persuaded to do anything which you deem unwise, because it has been done by your associates. Self-assertion, based upon good sense, is what is most needed by all who mingle with so-called worldly people.

AGED P.—We hardly think you will succeed in reducing the thickness of all. It is sometimes possible, according as they have been manufactured, to manage some by floating them on warm water, but the water must not be allowed to get on the top. When softened sufficiently the under portion may be pulled off.

GOOSEY.—Same preparation as for roasting. Put dessert spoonful of butter in deep saucepan, and when the pan is hot put in fowl; turn it over and over till it is browned all round, then put in tea-cupful of water and let stew till tender, constantly turning, and adding a little water now and then; make gravy with liquid left in pan.

LENA.—The celebrated "bottomless abyss" of France is situated in the province of Vaucluse, and is considered one of the most interesting geological wonders in the world. It is called the Abyss of Jean Naveah, and has been known for centuries. It is from three to twelve feet in diameter, and practically bottomless. It is supposed to be the vent of an ancient geyser.

IS TROUBLE.—The ear is much too delicate an organ to be tampered with by an inexperienced person; it is quite likely all you require is to have it syringed in order to wash out the wax which has hardened on the tympanum; but that should be done for you by a surgeon or one accustomed to it; perhaps a drop of oil, such as almond oil, put into the ear at night might soften the wax, and let it come away naturally.

DANDAR.—Take a spoonful of alum and two of salt-petre; crush thoroughly with a smoothing iron, or rolling with a bottle; sprinkle the powder on the flesh side of the skin, put the two flesh sides together, fold up as dry as possible, and hang in a dry place; in two or three days take the skin down and scrape it with a blunt knife till clean and supple; process is then complete.

AMATEUR LAUNDRESS.—After the collars and cuffs are starched they should be rolled in a clean white cloth for a few hours, to get rid of superfluous moisture, after which they should be laid singly on a clean cloth on the ironing-board and pulled into shape, and then ironed on each side alternately until thoroughly dry, when the polishing iron may be used. The iron should be used both across and lengthwise of the articles, rolling each collar or cuff into a circular form of wear, and pinning or otherwise fastening the ends together.

PEPPERMINT.—We know of no better recipe for making peppermint drops than the following: Boil a cupful of sugar to the hard ball. Remove it from the fire. Add a half-teaspoonful of essence of peppermint, and stir it just enough to mix the flavouring and cloud the sugar. Drop it into starch moulds or upon an oiled slab, letting four drops of the candy fall in exactly the same spot. It will then spread round and even. These drops should be translucent or a little white. Unless care be used the candy will grain before the drops are moulded; therefore it is better to pour it from the spot of the pan than to dip it out with a spoon.

C. P.—The most magnificent of our native timber or forest trees is unquestionably the beech, which attains as much as one hundred feet in height, and a girth of thirty-five to forty feet in some instances; it also outlasts all other trees, with exception perhaps of the oak; instances of beeches two hundred and three hundred years are not uncommon; next in importance is the birch, rising to sixty feet, but growing in latitudes where the beech does not make headway; then the fir of various kinds, maintaining themselves in their shallow soils in the most exposed districts, and reaching maturity quickly; for some purposes, such as larch wood for railway sleepers, the fir is without a rival.

SOPHIA.—Take equal weights of tender roast beef, sweet currants, raisins, and apples, which have been previously pared and cored, mix with half their weight of soft sugar, one ounce of powdered cinnamon, an equal quantity of candied orange and lemon peel and citron, a little salt, and twelve bitter almonds blanched and grated. Chop the meat and the sugar separately; wash and pick the currants, stone the raisins and chop them with the peel; and having minced all the ingredients very fine, mix them together, adding a nutmeg, grated, and the juice of a lemon. A glass or two of wine or one of brandy greatly improves it. Line your dish or patty pans with puff paste; fill with the mince, cover and pinch the edges together. Bake half an hour.

MAMA.—Soak the ham for twelve hours in plenty of cold water, then take it out and scrape it well; put it in a large saucepan covered with cold water; put on the lid, and let it boil gently for three hours; a ham weighing twelve pounds takes three hours; if less weight, it may take a little less time; if larger, a little more; let it cool in the water after it has boiled the necessary time, then take off the skin carefully; wash and pick the currants, stone the raisins and chop them with the peel; and having minced all the ingredients very fine, mix them together, adding a nutmeg, grated, and the juice of a lemon. A glass or two of wine or one of brandy greatly improves it. Line your dish or patty pans with puff paste; fill with the mince, cover and pinch the edges together. Bake half an hour.

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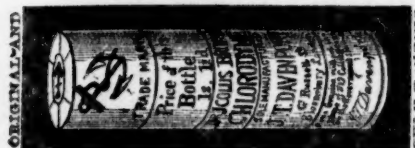
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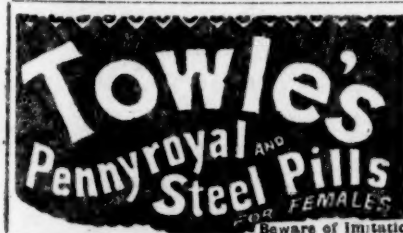
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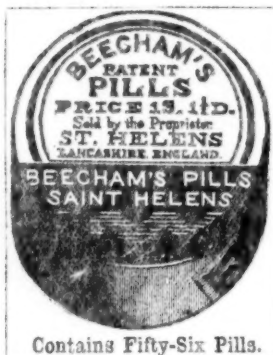
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